



Sexual violence against minor girls: Strengthening the protective environment in the city of Porto-Novo

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Abstract

This study aims to contribute to the improvement of female minor's protection system against sexual violence through strengthening the environment in the city of Porto-Novo. The survey is qualitative and quantitative type concerned 209 subjects including 189 young students and apprentices, and 20 child protection actors is to say 3 responsible for social promotion center, home to 1 Director, 1 Technical Assistant in Human Rights (TAHR), 11 players in the CGP, 1 child protection network president, 1 Social worker, and two legal assistants. The results reveal that the levels of protection system, protection strategies are much more developed in terms of prevention and in terms of management. Also, they have specific measures been taken to strengthen the protective environment and to reduce sexual violence. Furthermore, the study showed that some factors hindering the actions of prevention and support for victims, as presented by the multisectoral model. Examples are the lack of financial resources in structures, personnel insufficient, the persistence of subjective norms, the settlement and the resignation of some parents. This situation should raise questions and motivate the child protection structures to think better protection strategies.

Keywords: sexual violence, underage girls, protection strategies, actors

1. Introduction and Justification of the Subject

Sexual violence against children is a clear violation of children's rights, damaging their integrity and affecting their physical and psychological health (Idrissi, 2014) ^[2]. The World Health Organization (WHO) regards sexual violence as "any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, comment or advance of a sexual nature, or acts intended to traffic or otherwise directed against the sexuality of a person using coercion, committed by a person regardless of his or her relationship with the victim, in any setting, including, but not limited to, home and work" (WHO, 2002) ^[4].

Global phenomenon constantly evolving as technological advances (cybercrime, mobile telephony, etc.) and greater mobility of populations (migration, tourism, travel ...), sexual violence takes many forms (M'jid, 2008) ^[3]. The string of abused children in Africa in general, and in Benin in particular, is not insignificant. "These are uncomfortable data: no government or parent will want to see them," Lake said in 2014. In Benin, according to the results of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) carried out in 2014 by National Institute of Statistics and Economic Analysis (NISEA) with the support of UNICEF, the percentage of people aged 15-49 who admitted having been married or before the age of 18 is 31.7% for women and 6.1% for men; when the only 15-year-old is considered, this percentage is 11.3% for girls and 2.1% for men. The figures revealed hit as much as they give nausea states (Barzach, 2015). Indeed, these statistics indicate that many children in Benin are victims of sexual violence generally committed by persons known to the child (these are neighbors, relatives, employers,

parents and educators), despite the various sensitization campaigns organized to promote the rights of the child. Despite the legal provisions contained in the laws and laws relating to the rights of the child such as the Beninese Code of Persons and Family (CBPF), the National Commission of the Rights of the Child (NCRC), and the National Policy of Child Protection (NPCP), there are a number of factors that combine and interfere with one another, leading to the vulnerability of children and the persistence of child sexual abuse, including the resignation of the family in its educational role, the vulnerability of families due to endemic and structural poverty: monetary poverty, poverty of living conditions or accessibility and poverty of potential, the persistence of taboos and the tolerance of sexual harassment; the global development of the sex industry; the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), the lack of sex education at school; the lack of a code of conduct in structures working with children (some educators are abusers) impunity. Moreover, the insufficient anchoring of the culture of children's rights and the resistance of the patriarchy, despite new normative provisions putting the family under the responsibility of both spouses, are all factors favoring sexual violence against children. Children. The latter being manifested by the little value given to the word of the child, widespread perceptions that from a certain age the child is no longer victim but rather guilty, especially in terms of exploitation in prostitution and finally the persistence of discrimination against girls who are less educated in rural areas and who are married early.

However, national statistics are far from satisfactory. The lack

of centralized information and monitoring and evaluation systems is one of the reasons. In particular, they neglect the issue of sexual violence against children, which remains under-documented and therefore invisible. What is invisible does not exist and constitutes blind spots of public policies. This is the double drama of the victims: the violence that sacks them adds the silence that stifles them, isolates them (Barzach, 2015).

This is because victims fear retaliation and stigmatization. As a result, recourse to settlement amicably or customary law is common.

At the level of the capital city of Porto-Novo, the situation of child victims/potential victims of sexual violence does not seem radiant. Given that the provisions and means for their development, in this case their protection are often very limited in terms of their social situation. Thus, 110 cases of sexual abuse were recorded in the city of Porto-Novo, one of the intervention areas of the project to strengthen the institutionalization of the framework conditions for the protection of children against sexual abuse (RICAPE) during the year 2016. This project realized by the NGO International Circle for the Promotion of Creation in Benin, had a duration of 3 years, that is to say from 2014 to 2016. So during this period, there were a total of 269 recorded cases of sexual abuse.

It must be admitted that in Benin, the government has adopted laws, issued decrees and formalized regulations to promote the best interests of the child. Likewise, several public and private institutions (Social Promotion Centers, NGOs, orphanages, reception centers, listening centers) work hard for the respect of children's rights and their well-being through the reduction of cases of violence against them in our communities.

Admittedly, sexual violence is more denounced today than in the past. The legislation, under social pressure, is in a logic of punishment to prevent recidivism and improve the recognition of victim status. But despite repressive measures pan chronic, that is to say very old, sexual violence cross the centuries, codes, laws, knowledge, resist penalties, and perpetuate. The repressive aspect is necessary to ensure the protection of the society but it is also insufficient to guarantee the protection of the individuals (Lemoine, 2010).

If the prohibition and the repression were never enough to protect, to guarantee the safety and / or to spare the victims, does not it become necessary to have a complementary vision to the repression directed can be on a broader prevention which address to all, to those concerned and their entourage, to perpetrators and potential perpetrators of sexual abuse, be they adults, adolescents or pre-adolescents, to try to reduce the number of crimes and offenses and to influence the number of victims.

To better understand the strengthening of the protective environment of under-age girls against sexual violence through the specific measures implemented in the city of Porto-Novo, the following questions are worth asking:

- What are the strategies for combating and dealing with sexual violence against girls in the city of Porto-Novo?
- How do the specific measures implemented by non-state actors have an impact on the strengthening of the protective environment?

- What are the difficulties faced by the actors in strengthening the protective environment of children against sexual violence in the city of Porto-Novo?

Based on this fact and these questions, we postulate that:

- Protection system is based more on prevention than on care in the city of Porto-Novo;
- Strengthening of the protective environment of the child through specific measures taken by actors other than the State has effect on the reduction of the phenomenon;
- Actors encounter difficulties in strengthening the protective environment against sexual violence

As part of our study, the general objective is to contribute to the improvement of the system of protection of minor girls against sexual violence by strengthening the protective environment in the city of Porto-Novo. Specifically, it is:

- To identify strategies to protect against sexual violence against under-age girls;
- To determine the specific measures taken by the institutions to strengthen the protective environment of under-age girls against sexual violence;
- Make proposals for the improvement of the system of protection against sexual violence.

2. Methodological approach

2.1 Site concerned by the study

The infrastructure of two (02) districts out of the five (05) that counts the city of Porto-Novo constitutes the basin of our investigations, specifically it is on the one hand young / children pupils and apprentices of sex male and female, having been victims or not of sexual violence, and on the other hand the actors of the protection of childhood.

Table 1: Population and districts selected

District	Population	Presence of partner school of RICAPE project
Attakè	52571	Oui
Houinmè	63306	Non

2.2 Target populations and sampling

2.2.1 Target populations

In this study, the nonprobability method based on reasoned choice was used. Indeed, several reasons led us to choose this sampling method:

- Populations, especially girls in schools or not, because they are the most exposed and subject to sexual violence of any kind. In this category there are also the victims. Those who have been subjected to this sexual violence are better placed to talk about it. Boys are also involved, whether in school or not, as they are among the main perpetrators of sexual violence;
- Actors of the CGP because they are involved in the fight against this phenomenon. They are the first people to know about cases of violence when it takes place in the school setting;
- heads of the Departmental Department of the Family and / or the Center for Social Promotion (CSP) as they are responsible for the implementation of state policy in the

fight against violence against girls at the departmental level and or municipal;

- Leaders of NGOs working in the field of the fight against violence against girls in the city of Porto-Novo as they are

real actors in the process of prevention and care of victims. They are partners of the State in the implementation of its policy in the fight against the different forms of violence.

2.2.2 Sample subject to study

Table 2: Presentation of the sample size

Actors	Structures	Investigation Workforce
Heads of the service of social promotion centers (Ouando, Attakè and Djègan kpèvi)	Social Promotion Centers	3
Chairwoman	Oasis Center of Porto-Novo	1
Technical Assistant in Human Rights (TAHR) and actors of the CGP	International Circle of the Promotion of Creation (ICPC-Benin)	12
Chairwoman	Network of Structures for the Protection of Children in Difficult Situations (NSPCDS)	1
The Social Assistant, the legal assistants	La Passerelle	3
Students, apprentices	Secondary schools and learning centers	189
Total		209

2.3 Data collection instrument

2.3.1 Documentary compilation

In order to better define our field of intervention, we have consulted the memoirs, articles, theses and works that seem to abound in the same direction as our study and which focused on sexual violence against under-age girls or on strengthening the protective environment. These various documents were consulted in the Document Centers of the National Institute of Youth, Physical Education and Sport, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, ICPC, National Library, the Institute. French Benin, the archives of the CPS and NGOs.... We also looked at other documents drawn on different Internet search engines.

2.3.2 Interview

As part of this study, we used guided interview which is a qualitative technique of gathering information to focus the speech of respondents around the themes defined previously recorded in a maintenance grid. It allowed to listen to the leaders of CSP, the Technical Assistant in Human Rights (TAHR) of CIPCRE, the actors of the Charter of Good Practice (CGP), the Social Assistant of the Gateway, the Legal Assistants working there, the President of ReSPESD, the director of Oasis.

2.3.3 Questionnaire

Being a means that allows to touch a large number of subjects, rather quickly, it was addressed to the general population (students, apprentices). This instrument has 4 components: identification, knowledge of violence in general and sexual violence, knowledge of protection strategies and specific measures, and perception of the effects of strengthening the protective environment on the phenomenon.

2.3.4 Data collection procedure

The actual survey took place in the city of Porto-Novo with

the different subjects constituting our study sample. Thus, initially, on the basis of an interview guide developed for each of the targeted actors, we had individual interviews with them. After making appointments by telephone communication with the subjects concerned, we went to their office to conduct the interviews. This allowed us to collect information on previously prepared audio support. The exchanges were conducted within a timeframe of between 20 and 50 minutes. In a second step, based on a questionnaire developed for girls who were victims or not, and boys, we went to the schools in the selected districts. The realization took place according to the technique of face to face. The questionnaires were completed by us each time the target surveyed happens to be illiterate.

2.4 Data processing instruments

The data processing took place in two phases. First, it includes the counting of the interviews we had with the subjects. This counting consisted mainly in the transcription of the information in order to highlight the main topics addressed by our subjects through their answer to our questions. Following this, we created a grid of analysis based on the hypothesis of our subject of study. Indeed, this grid will allow us to produce the results relating to our survey. Once the themes and the grid were built, it was up to us to group together in each corresponding box the answers of the different actors. Then, the treatment consisted in counting the questionnaires. This recount consisted of taking stock of the information collected for each question. The processing of the information was done manually and by computer through Excel 2013. The operation was easy because of the numbering made beforehand for the questions. Responses to closed questions were evaluated by considering the total number of subjects and the information sought. Regarding the open questions, we did an analysis of the content of each proposal while remaining in harmony with our subject of study.

3. Results

3.1 Results from Quantitative Data

3.1.1 Results of general knowledge about sexual violence

Table 3: Forms of Sexual Abuse Quoted by Respondents

Sexual violence	Effective	Percentage
Rape	50	26,5%
Sexual harassment	38	20,1%
Forced marriage	28	14,8%
Sexual exploitation	16	8,5%
FGM	7	3,7%
Total	189	100%

It can be seen from this table that the forms of sexual violence against girls as accepted by the persons interviewed are in the following order: rape 26.5%, sexual harassment 20.1%; forced marriage 14.8%, sexual exploitation 8.5% and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) 3.7%.

Table 4: Causes of Sexual Violence Quoted by Respondents

Caused by	Effective		Percentage
	Girls	Boys	
Inconscience of parents	9	0	4,8%
Poverty of parents	61	11	38,1%
Excessive ambition of girls	13	9	11,6%
Wearing provocative outfits by girls	15	36	27,0%
Porn movies/serials	10	23	17,5%
Lack of sex education	1	1	1,1%
Total	109	80	100%

The causes that lead to sexual violence against under-age girls, as shown by the data collected from the respondents, are parental poverty (38.1%), the wearing of provocative clothing by girls (27%), viewing soap operas and pornographic films (17.5%), the excessive ambition of some girls (11.6%).

Table 5: Consequences of Sexual Abuse Quoted by Respondents

Consequences	Effective	Percentage
Unwanted Pregnancy/STI	80	42,3%
Early sexual activities	19	10,1%
Prostitution	23	12,2%
Desertion of classes/vocational training	27	14,3%
Abortion	24	12,7%
Death	16	8,5%
Total	189	100%

This table indicates that the consequences of sexual violence on victims are unwanted pregnancy and STIs, according to 42% of respondents; the desertion of classes or vocational training for 14.3% of them; abortion according to 12.7%, prostitution 12.2%; early sexual activity 10.1%; and death for 8.5% of respondents.

2.1.2 Results relating to knowledge of the child protection system

Table 6: Children's rights mentioned by respondents

Rights	Effective	Percentage
Right to care	101	53,4%
Right to protection	31	16,4%
Right to education	52	27,5%
Nothing	5	2,6%
Total	189	100%

This table reveals that 53.4% of respondents recognize that the child has the right to care, 27.5% mention the right to education. Only 16.4% of them have taken the right to protection, and 2.6% do not know anything about the rights of the child.

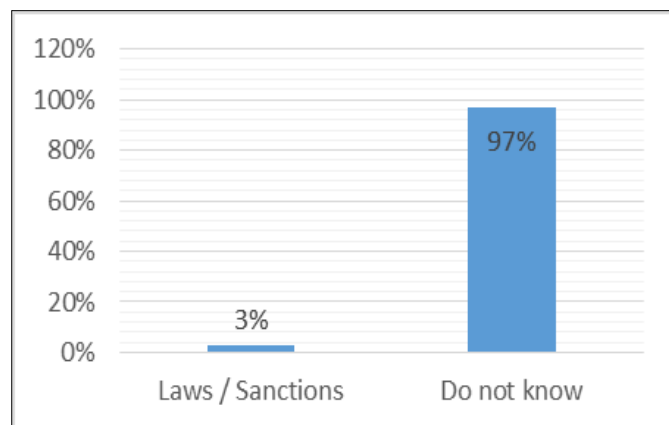


Fig 1: Laws Prohibiting Sexual Violence and Sanctions for Authors Referred by Respondents

This figure shows that the majority of respondents (97%) are not aware of the laws that protect them, nor the penalties applicable to perpetrators.

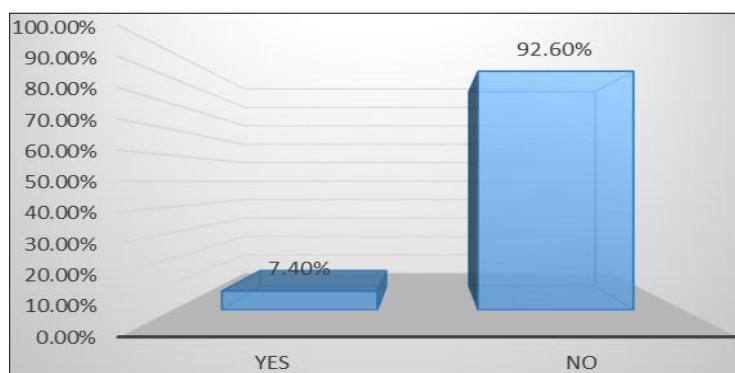


Fig 2: Knowledge of control strategies

The figure above shows that (92.6%) of respondents are not aware of strategies to fight sexual violence. However, 7.4% say they know about control strategies.

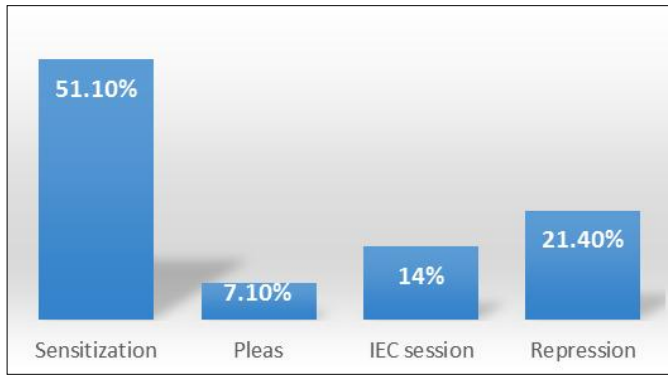


Fig 3: Response Strategies Referred by Respondents

Outreach is by far the strategy adopted by the structures, according to 57.1% of people who acknowledge having the notion of control strategies. They are followed by repression (according to 21.4% of respondents), IEC sessions (14%) and pleas (7.1%).

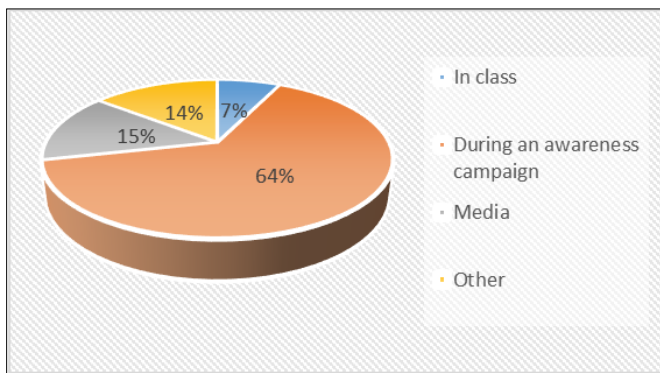


Fig 4: Means of knowledge of the control strategies mentioned

This graph shows that 64.3% of respondents say that they have adopted control strategies during an awareness campaign and 14.3% of these people knew it through the media.

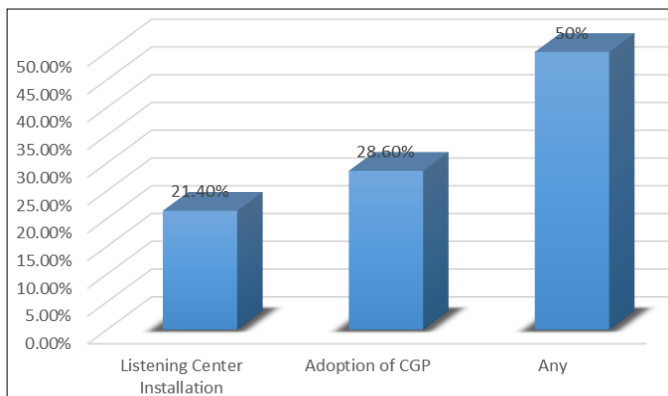


Fig 5: Special provisions made in institutions to combat sexual violence

This figure shows that 50% of respondents say that no specific

provision has been made in their establishments. But 28.6% attest that their schools have adopted the Charter of Good Practice (CGP) of which the International Circle for the Promotion of Creation (ICPC) is the investigator. Also, 21.4% say that the listening centers were installed in their schools by the Center of Young Love and Life (CYLL).

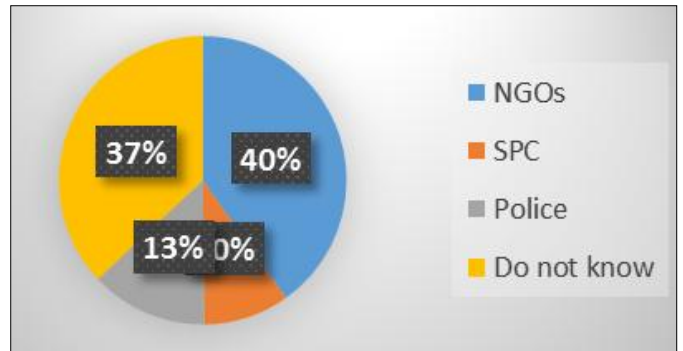


Fig 6: Knowledge of recourse or protection structures

This figure indicates that 40.2% of respondents believe that in the event of sexual violence, NGOs specialized in child protection are alerted while 37% assume that they have no knowledge of structures to alert. But 13.2% say they alert the police and 9.6%, the agents of Social Promotion Center.

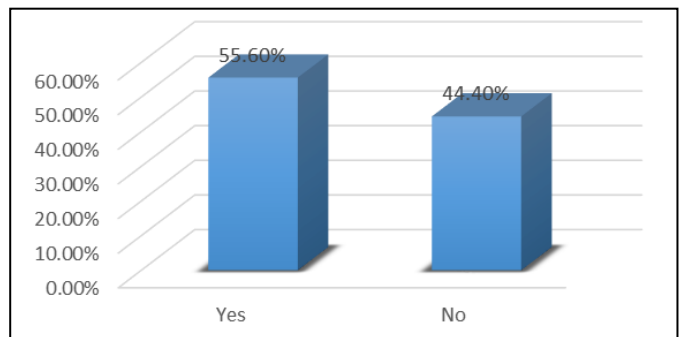


Fig 7: Perception of the phenomenon by respondent

While 55.6% admit that the phenomenon of sexual violence against children (especially girls) is decreasing, 44.4% say it is intensifying.

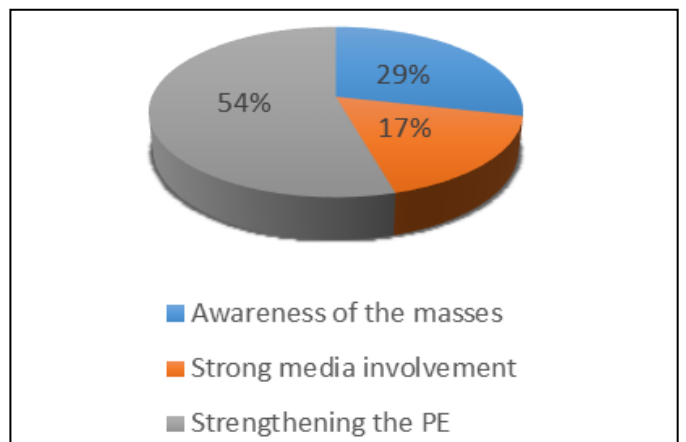


Fig 8: Reasons for reducing the phenomenon

From this figure, it is deduced that among the respondents who think that the phenomenon is experiencing a significant regression, 54% justify it by strengthening the protective environment, 28.6% believe that it is thanks to sensitization, and for 17% of them, this is due to the strong involvement of the media.

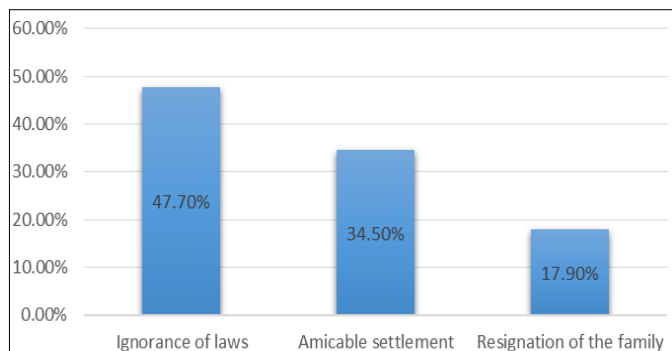


Fig 9: Reasons justifying the intensification of the phenomenon

Among the respondents who are convinced that sexual violence persists, 47.6% are based on impunity, then 34.5% on the use of the out-of-court settlement, and finally 17.9% on

3.2 Results from the interviews

the persistence of sexual violence poverty to affirm the intensification of the phenomenon.

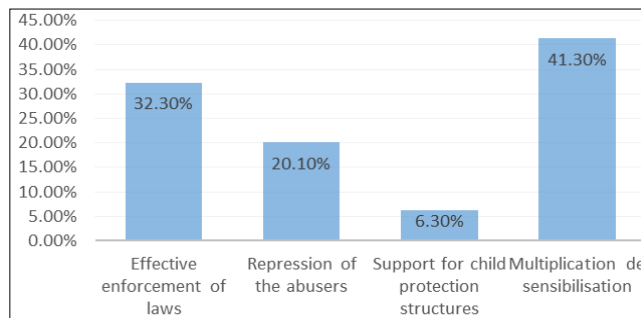


Fig 10: Proposals made by respondents to effectively combat sexual violence

This figure shows the proposals made by the respondents to fight effectively against sexual violence and to protect girls, 41.3% of respondents propose that sensitization campaigns multiply, while 32.3% believe that there is effective law enforcement. In addition, 20.1% suggest that the repression of the abusers must be in order and 6.3% evoke the support to the structures of protection of the child.

Table 7

Theme	Sub-Theme	Interviewed
Knowledge about sexual violence	Forms of sexual violence	- kidnapping/sequestration, rape, forced/early marriage, infant pregnancy, incest (abuse by a parent), sexual exploitation that is frequently reported. - On the other hand, the sexual harassment, the various remarks, touching, gestures, other acts related to the sex are the least denounced sexual violence.
	Causes of sexual violence	- the main causes are the resignation of some parents (not meeting the food and material needs of children, lack of follow-up, ...), the lack of communication and sex education, poverty in its various forms, ambition disproportionate of some girls, depravity of morals, television (distribution of soap operas on sexual acts), if not impunity, at least the weak repression of the act.
	Consequences of sexual violence	The consequences for the victims can be summed up as follows: physical traumas, psychic and psychological disorders, school and professional failures, school and professional dropouts, unwanted pregnancies followed by induced abortions, repeated STIs, HIV / AIDS, mortality motherhood, mistrust and inability to trust others, etc. There is also the economic cost of spending primarily on health, child welfare, criminal justice, lost productivity, and death.
Strategies of protection against sexual violence adopted by the structures and the care of the victims	Protection strategies	The establishment and strengthening of a protective environment is the most used strategy in the municipality through: sensitization (physical sessions, radio and television broadcasts), training of the various actors involved in this fight, advocacy campaigns support and support for target groups (technical and logistical support) for the implementation of their initiatives.
	Taking care of the victims	Psychosocial care is based on reception, listening and orientation according to the agents of the SPC, JPO, and NGOs. With regard to health care, the victim is referred to a medical center when it comes to rape for treatment and a medical certificate. Legal and judicial care involves the JPO, the court. The socio-professional PEC concerns support for school education or vocational training offered by NGOs. However, reception and accommodation services are limited in the city. The few that exist do not support girl-mothers.

Special provisions made in the municipality by NGOs	The establishment of the ReSPESD network	The ReSPESD, National Network of Structures for the Protection of Children in Difficult Situation works for the professionalization of the actors of the centers of reception, listening and orientation of the victims of abuses. To this end, he published a document on the standards and standards of reception centers for child victims.
	Charter of Good Practice	The invention and the implementation of a voluntarism but concerted commitment to fight against sexual abuse of children, called the "Charter of Good Practices for the Protection of Students against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse" by ICPC. CGP is an engagement platform for protecting students from sexual exploitation and abuse. It includes six (06) parties whose actors are determined and committed, personally and collectively, to act for the respect of human dignity vis-à-vis the students of an institution.
	Installation of the Ombudsman	He was appointed and installed an ombudsman who is a communal mediator of children. Appointed by the Mayor, he / she is responsible for promoting the rights of children in general and protecting them from sexual exploitation and all other violence in particular. As such, he / she works in collaboration with the communal service in charge of social affairs.
Difficulties faced by actors in strengthening the protective environment	Linked to structures	There is a lack of financial resources and poor capacity for caring for and monitoring children. This situation calls into question the viability and sustainability of the actions. We should also mention the lack of reintegration alternatives, and the difficulty of obtaining reliable data due to the lack of a system for collecting and processing information.
	Related to populations	The low disclosure of sexual violence, the persistence of amicable settlement due to the fact that, the medical certificate is expensive, the legal steps are too fateful and only rarely lead to the conviction of the authors, the recourse to traditional law, impunity due to the strong involvement of some local elected officials in cases that will have to be assigned to justice (corruption).

4. Discussion

4.1 Knowledge about sexual violence

First of all, before developing strategies to combat a phenomenon, it must first be identified. Thus, the respondents know the different forms that sexual violence takes: rape 26.5%, sexual harassment 20.1%; forced marriage 14.8%, sexual exploitation 8.5%, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) 3.7%. The subjects encountered at the level of the structures, for their part, mentioned kidnapping / sequestration, rape, forced/early marriage, childbearing, incest (abuse by a parent), sexual exploitation such as sexual violence frequently reported. On the other hand, sexual harassment, various obscene remarks, touching, sexual exhibition gestures, other acts related to sex are rarely denounced. This can be explained by the fact that these forms of sexual violence with the exception of touching are in the panel of non-contact sexual violence that are very difficult to prove. The reason is that it leaves no trace and many do not consider them as sexual violence. This last aspect is verified by the fact that none of the respondents could mention other sexual violence rarely reported in the structures, except for sexual harassment. Even at the level of those frequently denounced, none of the questioners cited abduction or sequestration; what they evoked, and which was not on the list of those cited by the interviewed subjects, is the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), since it was necessary for them to indicate the sexual violence typical of the city. From all the above, we can say that there is ignorance or neglect of some forms of sexual violence by the population.

With regard to the causes that lead to sexual violence against under-age girls, according to the respondents, it is the parents' poverty (38.1%), the wearing of provocative outfits by the girls (27%), the visualization some soap operas and erotic films (17.5%), the exaggerated ambition of some girls (11.6%), the unconsciousness of parents who do not take responsibility (4.8%) and the lack of sex education (1.1%). The main causes according to the interviewees are the resignation of some parents (non-satisfaction of the food and

material needs of children, lack of follow-up, ...), the lack of dialogue and education on sexuality, poverty in its different forms, emergence and development of pedophilic impulses in society and the development of sayings that justify and magnify sexual relations with minors, the excessive ambition of some girls, the depravity of morals, television (broadcast soap operas on sexual acts), if not impunity, at least the weak repression of the act. We note that causes were mentioned both by the respondents and by the persons met at the level of the structures. These are: poverty, the excessive ambition of some girls, the resignation of some parents (non-satisfaction of children's food and material needs, lack of follow-up,...) television (distribution of serials about sexual acts/ pornographic film). We deduce that these are the most persistent causes in time and that they can be summed up in the resignation of the parents considered as the nucleus of all the causes, because if all the parents gave themselves for mission the success of their offspring, which necessarily through the satisfaction of food and material needs, education in all its forms (school or professional, moral, sexual ...), affection, follow-up in everything, we would speak much less sexual violence. Whether sexual violence is intrafamily or extrafamilial, the role of the parents, that is to say the relationship of power, authority and control that the adult must exercise towards the child, is called into question.

With respect to the impact of sexual violence on victims, respondents cited unwanted pregnancy and STIs, according to 42% of respondents; the abandonment of classes or vocational training for 14.3% of them; abortion according to 12.7%, prostitution 12.2%; early sexual activity 10.1%; and death for 8.5% of respondents. It can be seen that the consequences that fall within the psychic domain are not known to the respondents, nor the eating disorders since there is a lack of information on this subject. So they just hinted at the consequences that do not require expertise, (that is, unusual medical procedures) to be discovered, since they are neither health professionals nor knowledgeable these sequels. But it seems that the problem lies elsewhere. Indeed, Salmona

(2015) ^[5] states that: "Even if sexual violence is recognized, its psychotraumatic consequences are not identified as such, nor explained or treated specifically since the vast majority of health professionals are still untrained, and do not make any links between symptoms presented by their patients and possible violence suffered".

This is consistent with the findings of Buljan, Flander, Coric' and Štimac, (2008) when they say that "a study of the experiences and attitudes of front-line physicians with the victims showed that they had aware of lack of knowledge in this area and need to be trained. So, if medical professionals do not master this aspect of the corollaries of sexual violence, it is not obvious that it is the population that knows it! Even though they are much more serious than we think. Regarding the subjects encountered at the level of the structures, they shed more light on the question and mention, apart from the consequences mentioned by the respondents, physical traumas, psychic and psychological disorders, that is to say - feelings of fear, shame, social isolation - mistrust and inability to trust others, etc. In addition, they also report the economic cost of spending primarily on health, child welfare, criminal justice and lost productivity. To tell the truth, if everyone could become aware of the harmful effects of sexual violence in the short, medium and especially long-term in the life of a victim, no one would dare to do this act, and the world would strive to protect the most vulnerable individuals (children). It is not in vain that Salmona (2013) ^[6] states that "the psychotraumatic consequences of this violence are enormous in terms of public health".

This aspect is unknown to the population, it will require awareness campaigns to inform them of the most serious consequences of violence, abuse, or sexual exploitation.

4.2 Strategies for protecting/combating sexual violence and caring for victims

First and foremost, it should be remembered that protection goes from prevention to care, when we refer to UNCEF's definition of child protection. The strategies that actors use to strengthen the protective environment are multiple. Figure 3 shows that these are sensitizations according to 57.1% of people who recognized the notion of control strategies. They are followed by repression (according to 21.4% of respondents), IEC sessions (14.3%) and advocacy (7.1%). While for the persons met at the level of the structures, or for the actors of child protection, the strategies are among others: the sessions of IEC/CCB, the formation, the plea, the denunciation, the schooling, the capacity building, radio broadcasts, recovery / reintegration, organization of community relays, talks, and especially the establishment and strengthening of a protective environment, through: sensitization (physical sessions, radio broadcasts and televisions), the training of the various actors involved in this fight, the advocacy campaigns, the support and support of the target groups (technical support and logistics) for the implementation of their initiatives. However, Figure 1 shows that the majority of respondents (97%) are not aware of the laws that protect them, nor the penalties applicable to perpetrators of sexual violence.

Only (3%) of the respondents mentioned the family code as a law, and mentioned without precision and in an approximate

manner the sanctions applicable to perpetrators (imprisonment, payment of fine, dismissal of office). Moreover, of the 189 people interviewed, there are only 14, who know the strategies of fight / protection. Yet, the organizations say that their actions are largely focused on social mobilization: awareness raising, capacity building, radio broadcasts and even the establishment and strengthening of PE. This means that their (actions) impacts are measured. This state of affairs is in line with the results of the study conducted by UNCEF (2006) which states that: "Awareness remains piecemeal, sectorial and often ad hoc; the messages are not always adapted to the targeted populations; their impact is not measured. In addition, ignorance of the laws and penalties applicable by respondents may be explained by the fact that most of the population is illiterate or has a relatively low level of education.

By looking at the ways in which these strategies were known by the respondents, 64.3% say they have adopted the strategies of struggle during an awareness campaign. 14.3% of these people knew it through the media; similarly, other means (internet, magazines), in the same proportion (14.3%), were recognized as having served to identify strategies to fight against sexual violence. 7.1% learned them in class.

There is also the problem of visibility, which is reflected in Table 16, which shows that 37% of respondents are not aware of the structures to be used in the event of sexual violence. As for the holistic care of the victims, it is difficult to speak of an outcome, because as Salmona (2013) ^[6] points out, "the sexual violence, very numerous in France, remains little taken into consideration by the medical actors. -social and political ", this is also the case in the city of Porto-Novo. In reality, this is a set of mechanisms that are not well coordinated, offering sectorial responses in the form of services for a particular category of children, instead of a real integrated protection mechanism accessible to all child victims. While integrated centers should be a reality throughout the territory. The viability of existing mechanisms and structures is compromised by inadequate financial and human resources, particularly social workers despite the efforts made, or even the lack of psychologists, the main actors in caring for children who are victims of violence. When we look at each sector's problems one by one, we see that effective measures to improve care in the city of Porto-Novo must be taken in order to ensure the protection of children such as children proposes the analytical model developed by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. At the level of the health sector, the medical certificate issued by the doctors lacks precision to serve as evidence that can indict the perpetrators. As a result, ICPC has proposed a more detailed model medical certificate, but it is difficult for doctors to adopt it because it takes time to fill it. In addition, the high cost of the medical certificate prevents victims from obtaining it when it comes to prosecuting perpetrators. Turning to the psychosocial sector, there is a shortage of psychologists. However, they are outside the health workers, the key parts in the repair of violence. Moreover, the effectiveness of the judicial sector is limited by the lack of evidence that should be provided by a forensic certificate. Added to this is the difficulty related to the age of the victims. With this, the Social Assistant of the Gateway

tells us that: "most children are not registered at birth, but it is imperative age to qualify the offense. Recall that very often, the measures enacted by the legislator to ensure the protection of the minor are not always respected. Thus, there are cases in which the judicial police officer interrogates the minor without the latter being assisted by a lawyer, his parents or a specialized person.

This situation is likely to compromise the minor who can then make compromising statements against him. At the level of security, there is insufficient material means; the police, gendarmerie and justice services do not all have spaces dedicated to children guaranteeing the confidentiality and protection of children during the numerous hearings. Beyond all, it will provide therapeutic care for perpetrators in general, especially for teenagers' perpetrators of sexual violence.

From all the above, we can say that the protection of children against sexual violence against underage girls in Porto-Novo is much more developed in terms of prevention than in the care of the victims. Therefore it is easy to see that hypothesis 1 is fully confirmed.

4.3 Specific measures taken by the actors to strengthen the protective environment

In the past, there was no specific provision for combating the phenomenon of sexual violence against under-age girls in the city of Porto-Novo. The structures told us that the sensitization was done around themes that do not directly address sexual violence such as schooling of girls, HIV/AIDS, hygiene etc. For nearly a decade, this phenomenon has begun to preoccupy child protection actors. This has necessitated the making of specific provisions by several structures intervening in order to strengthen the Protective Environment which is a set of legal provisions, rules and standards (national and international), institutions, practices and habits that protect the child from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect and promote its integral development. It should be noted that the structures active in the fight against sexual violence against under-age girls perpetrated on children are considerable. These are NGOs, NGO networks (ReSPESD) and indirectly communal and state actors at various levels. But the structures met declared that ICPC is the first actor involved in the fight against this phenomenon in the city, even if the Chiefs of School District; Social Advocacy Centers; the Chief Medical Officers of Health Centers; The Chiefs of Brigade (CB) serve as support for the protection of children, the management of cases of abuse, care, rehabilitation of victims and repression of perpetrators.

It should be noted that the Network of Structures for the Protection of Children in Difficult Situations (ReSPESD) is an existing network in every department of Benin, including Ouémé. That of Oueme has about fifteen structures. ICPC-Benin is a member of ReSPESD-Ouémé and occupies the secretarial position in the office. Its strong involvement in the fight against sexual violence against underage girls is recognized by 28.6% of the people questioned and by all the structures encountered. To carry out this fight, he initiated a project planned for a period of three (03) years (from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2016), named Strengthening the Institutionalization of Framework Conditions for the Protection of Children against Abuse in the department of

Ouémé RICAPE-Ouémé. This project aims to contribute to the establishment / strengthening of child protection in the area of prevention of sexual violence and abuse in the department of Ouémé in Benin, and therefore proposes to tackle these issues with the different targets involved in this struggle. Direct targets include: Parents (fathers, mothers and guardians of children); Children (primary and secondary school students, vendors, apprentices). The allied actors are: the communal actors: Municipal councilors (Mayors, Deputies, CA, Presidents social affairs commissions and Presidents financial affairs commissions), the communal officials and village councilors, the school community (administration, relay teachers, pupils peer educators, association parents, shop assistants, support staff); deconcentrated State services (Social Promotion Center, etc.) at the municipal and departmental levels; media actors; actors of religious denominations; the other actors of the civil society (NGOs, development associations, professional associations, crowned heads, / wise and notables, consultation frameworks, etc.).

The main activities of the project are: sensitization (physical sessions, radio and television broadcasts), training of the various actors involved in this fight, advocacy campaigns, support-support for target groups (technical support and logistics) for the implementation of their initiatives.

His flagship actions are numerous. First there was the regulation of the access of children, teenagers and young people under 18 to video clubs, cyber-café and various communication media by a communal decree. Promoters were made aware of the harmful effects of sexually explicit films on children. Admittedly, Benin's positive law recognizes children's right to information. But the different channels of communication do not always convey the information appropriate to the personal development of the child. Indeed, the series broadcast on the channels speak extensively of sexual relations. On the internet, teenagers and young people are engaged in the visualization of pornographic material. On their mobile phones, they download video clips, sexual photos. VCDs and DVDs, comics, magazines, and posters are also used for this purpose. Table 7 shows that 17.5% of respondents recognize that erotic films and serials are the cause of sexual violence against girls, although other causes have been mentioned such as: parental poverty (38, 1%), the wearing of provocative outfits by girls (27%), the excessive ambition of some girls (11.6%), the unconsciousness of parents who do not take their responsibilities (4.8%) and lack of sex education (1.1%). Among the other causes, some relate to the influence of the media. It is the wearing of indecent or provocative outfits by girls and the excessive ambition of some girls, since the series broadcast are out of step with our cultures and our realities. It is therefore right that the municipalities have adopted the decree prohibiting the access and distribution of films of a sexual nature.

With regard to the specific provisions, all the structures and some respondents (28.6%) mentioned the initiatives taken by CIPCRE both in schools and in non-school settings by ICPC. Speaking of the school environment, he focuses mainly on mass sensitization and training respectively for the school community and specific actors. To this end, he initiated a tool in the context of the fight against sexual abuse in partner

institutions called the Charter of Good Practice. Its adoption in these schools implies the setting up of a watch committee made up of several categories of actors including the category of teachers, that of the pupils, that of the parents of pupils, that of the sales staff, that of the service staff and finally, that of the officials of the Administration. These actors commit themselves to act for the respect of the human dignity of the pupils at the level of each establishment. Table 15 shows that 28.6% of respondents indicate that their schools have adopted the Code of Good Practice of which the ICPC is the investigator. In addition, 21.4% say that the listening centers were installed in their schools by the Youth and Life Center. But 50% of respondents say that no specific provision has been made in their institutions. This leads to the inference that although the Charter is institutionalized, school principals have not adopted it, since it is necessary for it to manifest the desire and lead the appropriate approach.

In addition, a vigilance committee has been set up to assist the Live Children far From Their Parents, either for learning purposes or for studies. Because they represent new issues that do not allow the eradication of sexual abuse of minors in the areas of intervention of ICPC. Before coming to this initiative, he first requested support from the municipal authorities who did not respond favorably to this request. As a result, ICPC has helped set up a community committee to monitor the LCFFTPs called the vigilance committee whose mission is to inquire about the daily lives of these children; in order to know how they live, to know the difficulties they face and in this sense, to bring them all the information on sexual abuse with the aim of preventing them from sexual violence against under-age girls.

Finally, he was appointed and installed ombudsmen who are communal mediators of children. Dictionary Ombudsman is a person whose job is to defend citizens and assert their rights with the public authorities. It's the equivalent of the mediator. In this case, he must be an agent of the town hall. Its role is to implement the city's annual action plan for children. In other words, its mission is to assert the rights of children in general and to ensure their protection against sexual exploitation and / or abuse and all other forms of violence in particular. As such, he / she works in collaboration with the communal service in charge of social affairs, by carrying out awareness activities, by monitoring and managing cases of rape and sexual abuse in the municipality. The ombudsman is also a member of the vigilance committee for monitoring live children away from parents (apprentices and students).

From all the above, we can say that specific initiatives to combat the phenomenon of sexual violence against under-age girls have been taken both in schools and non-schools in the city of Porto-Novo by the structures in charge of the protection of the rights of the child in this case by ICPC-Benin in order to contribute to the strengthening of the protective environment, and thus to the improvement of the protection system.

4.4 Effects of specific measures implemented by non-state actors to strengthen the protective environment

According to the results of our interviews, the various provisions mentioned above have had positive effects on the strengthening of the protective environment. Thus, thanks to

the strengthening of the protective environment, the phenomenon is declining according to some respondents. As table 18, shows that 54% justify it by the reinforcement of the protective environment, 28.6% estimate that it is thanks to the sensitizations, and for 17% of them, it is due to the strong implication of the media. Thus, we notice:

- A beginning of awareness of the populations and institutional actors who have broken the silence and who take concrete initiatives for the benefit of children;
- Awareness at the level of teachers. For example, professors admit that they have stopped harassing girls and having guilty relationships with them;
- Effective repression of school personnel. Indeed, many of the teachers, school authorities who despite the sensitization, the existence of laws prohibiting sexual violence, sexually abusing their learners are punished according to the sanctions applicable to perpetrators of violence or sexual abuse of a minor;
- A significant decrease in guilty relationships between students. Because after the adoption of CGP in their schools, cases of sex between comrades who were caught in the act are rare;
- An increasing number of reports of cases of sexual violence either by the victims or by the parents of the victims.

Because of these effects, we can say that Hypothesis 3 is fully confirmed.

4.5 Difficulties faced by actors in strengthening the protective environment

Strengthening the environment contributes a little to reducing sexual violence. However, problems remain posed according to the managers of structures and some respondents (44.4%) despite the specific measures taken. Thus, there is frequent recourse to amicable settlement; the ignorance of children and their families about their rights and the laws that govern the protection of children against sexual violence against under-age girls; the resignation of parents in meeting the needs and education of their children, the lack of financial, material and human resources; the lack of integrated care centers, the precarious care centers, the existence of harmful judicial practices according to the actors. In addition, respondents who are convinced that sexual violence persists, 47.6% rely on impunity, then 34.5% on the use of the amicable settlement, finally 17.9% on persistence of poverty to affirm the intensification of the phenomenon.

In view of the results obtained, we find that Hypothesis 3 is fully verified.

5. Conclusion

Our study, which focused on the subject: "Sexual violence against girls: strengthening the protective environment in the city of Porto-Novo", allowed us to elucidate several elements related to sexual violence. In general, it was a question of studying the system of protection of children especially girls against sexual violence in the city of Porto-Novo. To do so, we thought it was more appropriate to identify the strategies to combat sexual violence against girls and to take care of the victims, to determine the specific measures taken by the institutions to strengthen the environment protector of girls

against sexual violence; to analyze the difficulties encountered by the actors in strengthening the protective environment. Our study being both quantitative and qualitative, we used the non-probability study method which allowed us to constitute a sample of subjects potentially concerned by our study.

At the end of our research, the surveys, whether quantitative or qualitative, revealed that girls in the municipality of Porto-Novo are victims of sexual violence in various forms. Many causes are mentioned by both respondents and actors. Let's acknowledge, however, that all causes are the resignation of parents who no longer assume their roles in food, education, health, moral, emotional ... thus making underage girls more inclined to sexual violence. Presenting the most disastrous consequences in terms of mental, intellectual, social, and even economic development, they affect not only the individual but also society as a whole. Conscious of this situation, the child protection actors have adopted protection strategies that are more developed in terms of prevention than in terms of care. Victims also benefit from medico-psycho-socio-legal care, even if it is embryonic because of certain constraints and the lack of real involvement of the various actors involved at this level.

This, no doubt motivated the actors to direct most of their actions in the area of prevention, that is to say, the strengthening of the protective environment. For this purpose, specific measures have been taken. They have somewhat strengthened the protective environment by raising the awareness of school personnel and the population of the open environment and by reducing the incidence of sexual violence in the city, especially in institutions.

However, in light of the findings of the protection system, challenges remain to be met by both government institutions and communities in general. In fact, this concerns, among other things, the weakness of financial resources limiting intervention capacities and calling into question the viability and sustainability of actions, the insufficiency of reintegration alternatives, and difficulties in obtaining reliable data because of the lack of a system for collecting and processing information. At the community level, the challenges mainly concern the persistence of the taboo, the persistence of certain subjective perceptions, the resignation of the parents, the harmful judicial practices according to the actors. Therefore, it is essential that the government, local authorities and all actors of the civil society in charge of the sector take appropriate measures to improve the system of protection of children against sexual violence from the point of view of prevention and support.

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