

Some religious, myths, beliefs, and cultural dispositions as contributors to child sexual abuse in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

While on paper Zimbabwe has a comprehensive child protection legal framework, the occurrence of child sexual abuse (CSA) is high. Drawing from findings of a qualitative study, a case study design, and a research population consisting of a forum of organizations providing CSA interventions: the Victim Friendly System, this paper presents how some cultural myths, cultural practices, cultural rites, and religious practices may contribute to CSA in Zimbabwe. Purposive sampling was used to select 38 professionals working in the VFS, 4 key informants, 17 VFS monthly meeting minutes, and 300 court files of tried and sentenced CSA cases from Harare and Gokwe. CSA is a gross child and human rights violation that places some religions, myths, beliefs, and cultural practices at crossroads with social work principles. Various social work interventions are suggested as ways to navigate the paradox: shaped by cultural, traditional, religious, and mythical factors contributing to CSA and legal frameworks to address CSA.

Keywords: Religious practices, cultural practices, myths, beliefs, child sexual abuse, social work Zimbabwe