

Assessment of the Integration of Child-Friendly Elements in Tafawa Balewa Town, Bauchi State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *The study assessed the integration of Child friendly elements in Tafawa Balewa town of Bauchi state, Nigeria. Both quantitative and qualitative survey were employed to gain an understanding of the Child friendly elements that have been integrated in Tafawa Balewa town of Bauchi state, Nigeria. Data was collected through observation, Focus Group Discussions and questionnaire administration. The study employed both stratified and purposive sampling techniques to select the samples from the target population. Stratified sampling technique was used to categories the selected schools into different strata such as; mixed and single sex schools, day and boarding, public and private schools among others. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the relevant stakeholders who are believed to be knowledgeable in child friendly issues of Tafawa Balewa town. A total of 75 stakeholders were purposively selected and voluntarily participated in the study. The findings revealed that Children's participation; Legal framework; Rights strategy; Rights unit; Impact assessment and evaluation; Report and Independent Advocacy were the key elements of child friendliness in the study area. The study further revealed that, the overall percentages demonstrating adherence to the integration of the different CFC elements was relatively poor; an indication that the study area is not child friendly. Therefore, the study recommends that policy makers should develop a comprehensive child friendly strategy/plan for the integration of the Child-friendly elements. Also, the local government administrators, in partnership with the state government, should create public awareness and education campaign on the Child Right Act.*

Key Words: assessment, integration, child-friendly, child-friendly elements.

INTRODUCTION

Children like adults play a significant role in the growth and development of communities, neighborhoods, towns and cities. For instance, they can contribute to the development, livability and welfare cities in unique ways. Life and livelihood activities in cities are mostly dominated by the views of adults, and the children's needs are often considered to have been satisfied by these views. The needs of children as citizens must however be considered because they are at the age stage in their growth as humans when they learn about everything around them (Cordero-Vinueza, et al. 2023). Children are often not considered among the key stakeholders in the development of the city due to their immature age (Van der Graaf, 2020). As citizens of the city, children also have their own perceptions towards the serviceability and livability, values, experiences, and expectations of the town they live (Van der Graaf, 2020). The concept of a Child Friendly city was initially conceived by Kevin Lynch in research entitled children's perception of the environment in 1971. The outcome of Lynch's study revealed that the best urban environment for children is a community that is strong physically and socially, having clear and unequivocal rules, provides opportunities for children, and works as educational environment and the world.

In 1989, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulated that child should be given the opportunity to have their voices heard (Tobin, 2019). Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) was launched in 1996 to act on the resolution passed during the second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) to make cities livable places for all (UN-HABITAT, 2005). In UNICEF terms, the aim is to put "children first". The UN conference declared that the well-being of children is the ultimate indicator of a healthy habitat, democratic society with good governance (Tobin, 2019). The Child Friendly City is however a developmental concept of the city where the rights and perceptions of children are appreciated, facilitated, and considered within their place to live, learn, grow and play (Wilson, 2022). The call for Child Friendly Cities is rooted in the recognition that cities are home to an increasing proportion of the world's children, yet most cities are largely unfriendly for children (Brown, et al., 2019). By 2002, close to half the world's children lived in urban centers, most of them in low and middle-income nations UN-HABITAT (2005). Africa has twice as many urban children as North America, and projections suggest that by 2025 six (6) out of ten (10) children will be in urban areas in low and middle-income countries (UNICEF, 2019).

However, most cities in Nigeria still tend to ignore and marginalize children in urban life. It is hard to find safe and comfortable playgrounds in many Nigerian cities and children are forced to use street and/or any vacant land around them as playgrounds. These conditions could make playing a dangerous activity for children. However, the decision makers in the major cities of Nigeria are considering the idea of developing programmes to make their cities child friendly. Unfortunately,

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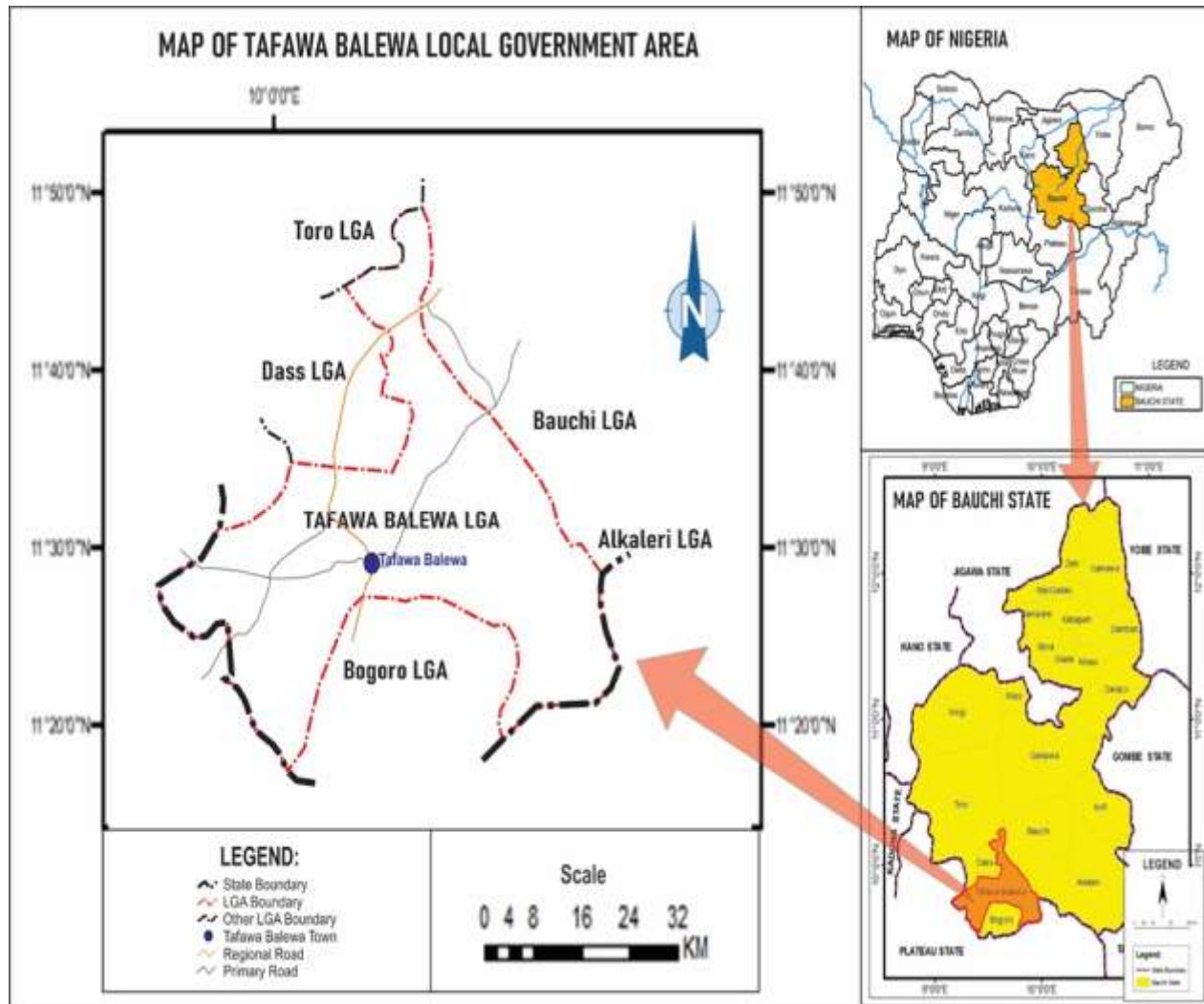
violence is a common occurrence in the cities, towns, communities, neighborhoods, and homes in Nigeria and other countries where children through no fault of their own are often directly or indirectly engaged or targeted (UNICEF, 2019). In Tafawa Balewa, the indicators of its compromised child friendliness include: traffic, inadequate basic services; inadequate playgrounds, green spaces and gathering places, attacks on school children, harassment and crime; etc.

Past studies conducted elsewhere by (Mehtap, 2016; Adams, et al. 2019; Nan, 2020; Gill, 2021; Agarwal, Sehgal, & Ogra, 2021; Rakhimova, McAslan, & Pijawka, 2022) focused on physical environmental child friendly issues such as children's play spaces, green spaces, and independent mobility, etc. However, little research is available on investigating the child friendly elements with reference to the nine components of the child friendly cities framework. Against this background, the study assessed the integration of the Child-friendly elements in Tafawa Balewa town with reference to the Child Rights Act under convention.

The Study Area

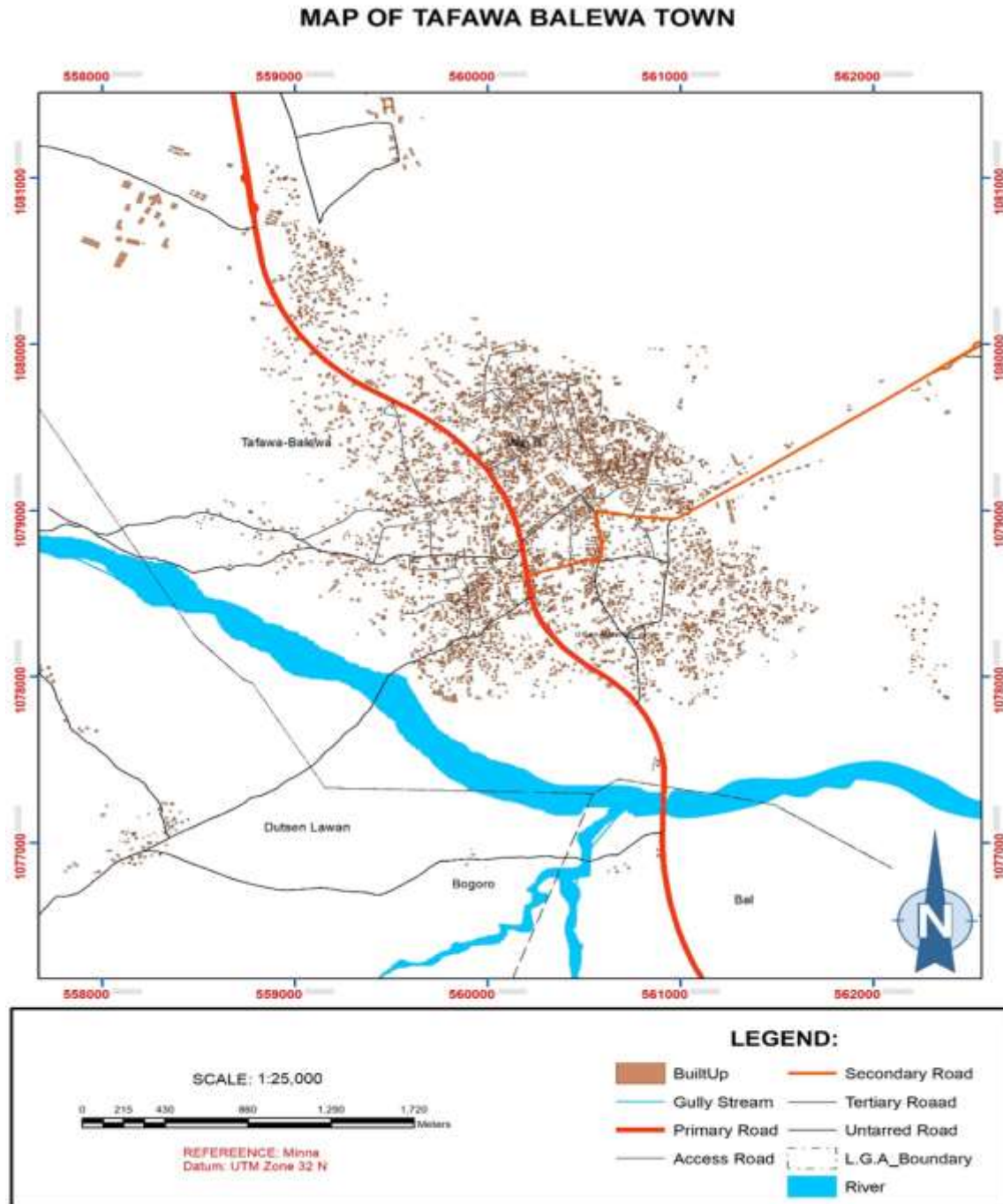
Tafawa Balewa Local Government Area is located in southern part of Bauchi State. It has an area of land, which covers about 279km², and a distance of 72km from Bauchi. Tafawa Balewa Local Government Area is bounded by Toro, and Dass in the North-West, Bauchi and Alkaleri Local Government Areas in the North-East and Bogoro in the South. Tafawa Balewa lies generally at an altitude of about 600m above sea level, being part of the central Nigeria highlands and Jos Plateau complex. However, Tafawa Balewa town which is the study area is in the relief zone of the western high land area of hill ranges, including the northern edges of the Jos Plateau complex.

The town is drained by several river systems. The dominant one is River Gongola which originates in the Jos Plateau area, southwest of Bauchi State. It traverses, in a southwest-north east direction through the southern LGAs of the state including Dass, T/Balewa, Bogoro, Bauchi and Kirfi and, thence, to Gombe State. The average annual rainfall of Tafawa Balewa is 1009mm with July and August recording the highest monthly rainfall of about 287mm. The highest monthly temperature is recorded in April with an average daily temperature of 29.3°C and the lowest daily temperature is recorded in December at about 22.4°C.



Source: Google image, captured and digitized in 2025

Figure 1: Locational Map of Tafawa Balewa



Source: Google image, captured and digitized in 2025

Figure 1: Contour Map of Tafawa Balewa Town

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive and qualitative survey was carried out to gain an understanding of how the Child friendly elements are being integrated in Tafawa Balewa town of Bauchi state, Nigeria. The study employed both primary and secondary sources of data. The research used primary instrument of questionnaires, interview, focus group discussion, photography and observations. The secondary instruments used include: review of government publications, journals, books, magazines, newspapers, the internet, among others in eliciting information from the respondents within the study area. The population is made up of children (9-16 years old) and stakeholders within the study area. The literature suggests that children in their middle-childhood (6-12 years) most actively use outdoor spaces (Chawla, 1992). However, the (6-16 years old) age bracket was used in the context of Tafawa Balewa culture, norms, values and society.

In this study the sample frame is made up of 75 stakeholders and 3,023 children within the age range of (6-16 years old) drawn from the seven neighborhoods and seven selected schools of Tafawa Balewa town for questionnaire administration. The town's stakeholders include past and present local government administrators, community leaders, registered professionals in the built environment, NGO's, CBO's, trade unions, Parent Teachers Associations, community Youth leaders, Women leaders and a representative each from the various neighborhoods, form the focus groups for this study.

The study employed both stratified and purposive sampling techniques to select the samples from the target population. Stratified sampling technique was used to categories the selected schools into different strata such as; mixed and single sex schools, day and boarding, public and private schools among others. This is because mixed and single sex schools, day and boarding, public and private schools may not necessarily have similar characteristics, since even the personnel in different departments within the same school may not always have similar thinking over given issue (Willis & David, 2009). Purposive sampling technique was used to select the relevant stakeholders who are believed to be knowledgeable in child friendly issues of Tafawa Balewa town. This technique was used because allocation of spaces for children, provision of child friendly facilities, safety, security, and children's livability within the town is the decision of all stakeholders. As such individual decision cannot be regarded at the city/town level.

Using purposive sampling, stakeholders and five representatives each from the various neighborhoods were selected for participation in the Focus Group Discussion during the study. These selected stakeholders were identified and contacted through invitation letters to attend a one-day round table discussion to share their views, opinions and perceptions about the child friendliness of Tafawa Balewa town. The study targeted about 100 stakeholders for the focus group

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discussions, however out of this target number who were invited, only 75 participants attended which included 50 men and 25 women. Two research assistants were employed one was secretary to help in collecting the data representing the major shades of opinions and taking the recommendations of the participants, and a camera man who video-filmed the event. On the children's part, all the selected schools were visited and their population obtained as presented on the table below A total of 353 questionnaires was administered in the selected schools in proportion to their respective population as presented in the tables below.

The data sourced from the field survey were subjected to univariate analysis like simple descriptive statistics. Some statistical measures of central tendency such as; mean and standard deviations were also employed. The results were presented using frequency and percentage tables, plates and charts.

Table 1: Selected schools and questionnaire distribution in the study area

Schools	No. of students	No. of questionnaires
Government Day Secondary School T/B	407	48
Government Day Secondary School GRA	755	88
Government Day Technical College T/B	694	81
Government Junior Secondary School M/Daji	198	24
Central Primary. School. T/B	349	41
Dungah Sabo Primary School	323	38
Rafin Gimba Primary School.	279	33
TOTAL	3023	353

Source: Author's Field survey, 2024

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The process of establishing child friendly cities includes the following nine elements that promote child rights: participation in decision making; a child-friendly legal framework; a citywide child rights strategy; a child rights unit or coordinating mechanisms; child impact assessment and evaluation; a children's budget; a regular State of the City's Children report; advocating child rights; and independent advocacy for children (UNICEF, 2019).

However, the information obtained from the Focus Group Discussion conducted with stakeholders in the study area shows that more than 75% of the people who participated in the discussion indicate the following as the key elements for child friendliness in Tafawa Balewa town; Children's consultation and participation; A child-friendly legal framework; A town-wide Children's rights

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strategy; A children's Rights unit; Child impact assessment and evaluation; A regular town's Children report and Independent Advocacy for children.

The responses on whether or not children are being consulted and allowed to participate in all decisions affecting them in the study area is indicated on Table 2. It was found that 13.3% of the respondents indicated "Strongly agree", 20.0% indicated "Agree", 16% remained "Neutral", 24.0% indicated "Disagree" and 26.7% indicated "Strongly disagree". This implies that most decisions affecting children are being made by the adults which denies children's right to participation under convention. Chan et.al. (2016) reported that one of the common problems encountered in respect of children's participation is insufficient children's participation. Facilitators often do not know how to empower children and as a result, participation tends to manifest itself in the non-participatory forms of 'participation': manipulation, and tokenism. Wilson (2022) argued that, promoters allegedly did not believe in the capacity of children to effectively participate, feeling that they were too young and unable to carry out their proposals.

Table 2: Children consultation and participation in all decisions affecting them

	Frequency	Percent
SA	10	13.3
A	15	20.0
N	12	16.0
D	18	24.0
SD	20	26.7
Total	75	100.0

Source: Author's Field survey, 2024

The data on the existence of legal framework that promotes and protects the rights of all children as indicated in Table 3, shows that 9.3% of the respondents indicated "Strongly agree", 17.3% indicated "Agree", 13.3% remained "Neutral", 33.3% indicated "Disagree" and 26.7% indicated "Strongly disagree". This implies that there is inadequate legislation for promoting and protecting the rights of children in the study area despite the vital role legislation can play in creating child friendly city. This further confirmed the result obtained in Table 2 above on the Children consultation and participation in all decisions affecting them.

Table 3: Existence of legal framework that promote and protect the rights of all children

	Frequency	Percent
SA	7	9.3
A	13	17.3
N	10	13.3
D	25	33.3
SD	20	26.7
Total	75	100.0

* SA- strongly agree, A - agree, N - Neutral, D- disagree, SD - strongly disagree

Source: Author's Field survey, 2024

Based on the responses about existence of a strategy for making Tafawa Balewa a child-friendly city, 36.0% of the respondents indicated "Strongly agree", 18.7% indicated "Agree", 10.7% remained "Neutral", 16.0% indicated "Disagree" and 18.7% indicated "Strongly disagree" (Table 4). This implies that majority of the respondents understand that there is available strategy that focused on the rights of children. The limited success achieved in Child friendly city initiative in Port Harcourt, Nigeria was a lack of institutional capacity and good governance, particularly in the absence of respect for basic principles of democracy, combined with a poor infrastructure for good governance (Gilbert & Allen, 2014; UNICEF Nigeria, 2013).

Table 4: City-wide Children's rights strategy focused on creating a Child Friendly City

	Frequency	Percent
SA	27	36.0
A	14	18.7
N	8	10.7
D	12	16.0
SD	14	18.7
Total	75	100.0

* SA- strongly agree, A - agree, N - Neutral, D- disagree, SD - strongly disagree

Source: Author's Field survey, 2024

On the existence of department, unit or agency responsible for coordinating, promoting and drafting policies affecting children, the study reveals that 24.0% of the respondents indicated "Strongly agree", 17.3% indicated "Agree", 16.0% remained "Neutral", 29.3% indicated "Disagree" and 13.3% indicated "Strongly disagree". This implies that majority of the respondents indicated that there is no structure in the study area to ensure priority consideration of children's perspective. This emphasizes the need for a more feasible plan of action and strong partnerships across different levels of government and department.

Table 5: Department, Unit or agency responsible for coordinating, promoting and drafting policies affecting children

	Frequency	Percent
SA	18	24.0
A	13	17.3
N	12	16.0
D	22	29.3
SD	10	13.3
Total	75	100.0

* SA- strongly agree, A - agree, N - Neutral, D- disagree, SD - strongly disagree

Source: Author's Field survey, 2024

On whether statistical data and other information about children in the town are routinely collected, the result shows that 26.7% of the respondents indicated "Strongly agree", 13.3% indicated "Agree", 17.3% remained "Neutral", 20.0% indicated "Disagree" and 22.7% indicated "Strongly disagree" (Table 6). This implies that there are inadequate documents that contain information about children like children live birth, child mortality, number of children with disability, etc. without current and previous data on one group, realistic projections cannot be made.

Table 6: Monitoring and data collection on the state of children and their rights

	Frequency	Percent
SA	20	26.7
A	10	13.3
N	13	17.3
D	15	20.0
SD	17	22.7
Total	75	100.0

* SA- strongly agree, A - agree, N - Neutral, D- disagree, SD - strongly disagree

Source: Author's Field survey, 2024

On whether there is the partnership between LGAs and NGOs to promote children's rights in the town, (Table 7) shows that about 9.3% of the respondents indicated "Strongly agree", 17.3% indicated "Agree", 6.7% remained "Neutral", 40.0% indicated "Disagree" and 26.7% indicated "Strongly disagree". The result, implies that there is lack of partnership between local government and non-governmental organizations. Chan et.al., (2016) reported that one of the challenges of the promoting children's rights is that city governments are often wary of independent advocacy by NGOs and instead choose to exclude NGOs to some extent in CFC Initiatives so that they promote

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children's rights within a limited framework that is devised by the city government, inevitably leading to compromise. Bano (2019) and Giles-Corti, Lowe, and Arundel (2020) reported that when NGOs are selected by those in the government, it would lead to favoritism and cronyism without much space for independent or critical voices.

Table 7: Local government partnership with NGOs to promote children's rights

	Frequency	Percent
SA	7	9.3
A	13	17.3
N	5	6.7
D	30	40.0
SD	20	26.7
Total	75	100.0

* SA- strongly agree, A - agree, N - Neutral, D- disagree, SD - strongly disagree

Source: Author's Field survey, 2024

The data budget allocations on children's projects as shown on Table 8 reveals that, about 4.0% of the respondents indicated "Strongly agree", 5.3% indicated "Agree", 2.7% remained "Neutral", 33.3% indicated "Disagree" and 54.7% indicated "Strongly disagree". This implies that there is lack of sufficient, sustainable and accountable budget provisions for CFC initiatives. Pecora, et.al. (2018) also found that insufficient budget as well as a lack of budgetary transparency are some of the common problems encountered by CFC Initiatives. Among the exceptions is Barra Mansa, Brazil, which provides locally elected children with a budget to finance projects they consider will improve the city from a children's point of view (Chan et.al. 2016; San Miguel, 2019).

Table 8: Budget allocated for children's needs within the city

	Frequency	Percent
SA	3	4.0
A	4	5.3
N	2	2.7
D	25	33.3
SD	41	54.7
Total	75	100.0

* SA- strongly agree, A - agree, N - Neutral, D- disagree, SD - strongly disagree

Source: Author's Field survey, 2024

The data obtained on making children's rights known (Table 9) revealed that, about 2.7% of the respondents indicated "Strongly agree", 2.7% indicated "Agree", 5.3% remained "Neutral", 54.7% indicated "Disagree" and 34.7% indicated "Strongly disagree". This implies that there is a lack of

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adequate strategy to make children's rights known. There is nonetheless the absence of capacity-building amongst many CFC Initiatives, which also ultimately hinders efforts to effectively engage and benefit children (Sirait & Ikhsan, 2020). For example, in the Greater Amman Municipality majority of staff and policymakers lacks training on children's rights, and are especially in need of such training in order to enhance their ability to effectively facilitate children's participation (Derr, Chawla, & Mintzer, 2018).

Table 9: Availability of strategies to make children's rights known

	Frequency	Percent
SA	2	2.7
A	2	2.7
N	4	5.3
D	41	54.7
SD	26	34.7
Total	75	100.0

* SA- strongly agree, A - agree, N - Neutral, D- disagree, SD - strongly disagree

Source: Author's Field survey, 2024

Table 10, shows that about 4.0% of the respondents indicated "Strongly agree", 22.7% indicated "Agree", 13.3% remained "Neutral", 40.0% indicated "Disagree" and 20.0% indicated "Strongly disagree". The data reveals inadequate regular evaluation of the impact of the development activities on children in relation to the child rights Act. Goldhagen, et.al. (2020) pointed out that lack of comprehensive surveys further hampers the creation of sound databases that can be used for assessment, evaluation and follow up.

Table 10: Regular evaluation of the impact of child rights Act on children

	Frequency	Percent
SA	3	4.0
A	17	22.7
N	10	13.3
D	30	40.0
SD	15	20.0
Total	75	100.0

* SA- strongly agree, A - agree, N - Neutral, D- disagree, SD - strongly disagree

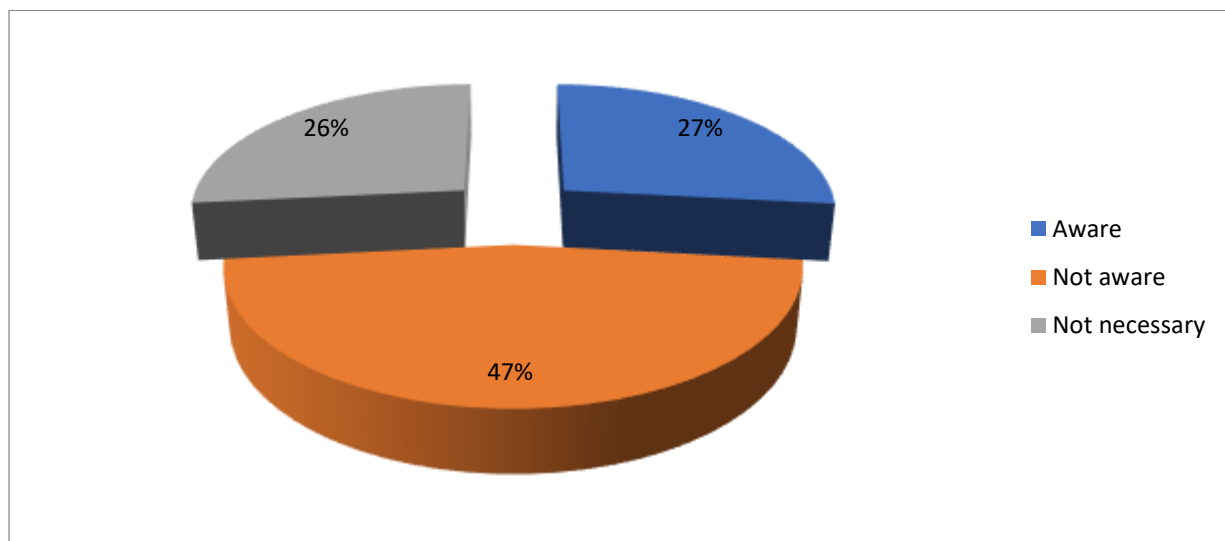
Source: Author's Field survey, 2024

Constraints and Potentials for a Child Friendly Tafawa Balewa Town.

Data on whether the stakeholders are aware of the children's rights to be heard in all proceedings affecting them and respect their (Figure 2) reveals that, 27.0% of the respondent's indicated

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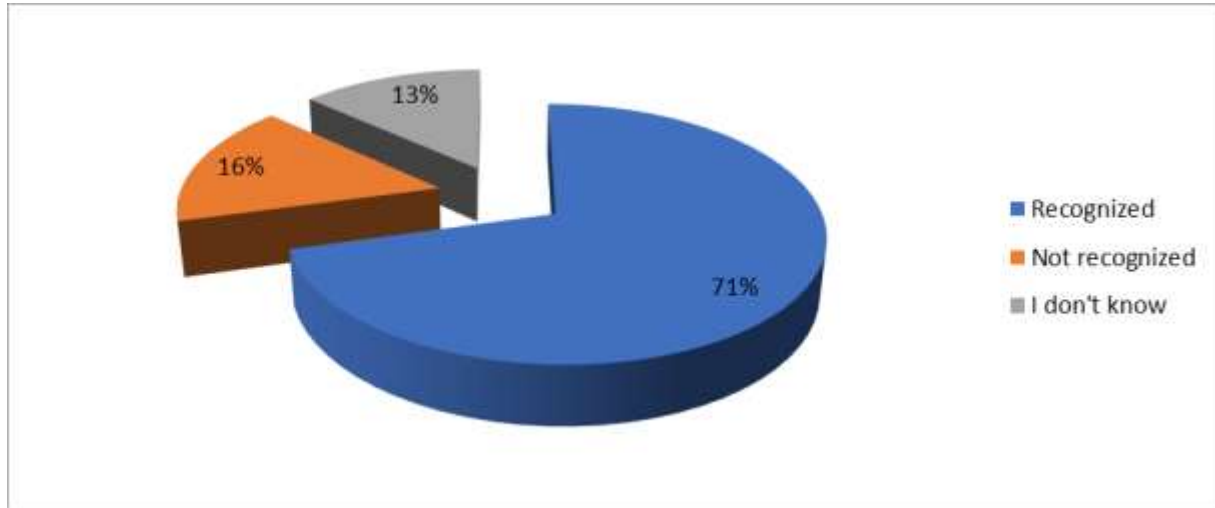
awareness, while, 47.0% of them indicated that they are not aware, while the remaining 26.0% of them consider children's views as not necessary. This reveals that children in Tafawa Balewa town are largely denied the rights to express their views and to be heard in the proceedings affecting them. In a similar study, Byrne, and Lundy (2020) pointed to the need for the notion of citizenship to include much more than, a framework of adult to rights. The argument is that children are to participate effectively as community contributors because they are experts in the environment where they spend most time (Ataol, Krishnamurthy, & Van Wesemael, 2019).



Source: Author's field survey, 2024

Figure 2: Tafawa Balewa-Stakeholders' awareness of children's rights to be heard

From the respondent's opinion on whether the culture in Tafawa Balewa recognizes children's outdoor activities as (Figure 2) shows that 71.0% of the respondents consider that their culture recognizes children's outdoor activities, while 16.0% of them indicated that it does not recognize, and the remaining 13.0% of them indicated that they "don't know". It implies that there is cultural constraint preventing children from engaging in outdoor activities also about 71.0% of respondents do not object to children engaging in outdoor activities on cultural reasons as long as there is security, safety and no economic costs. Thus, the implementation of child friendly city initiatives should be easy in the town.



Source: Author's field survey, 2024

Figure 3: Culture and children's outdoors activities

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study investigated the integration of Child friendly elements in Tafawa Balewa town of Bauchi state, Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed among others that Children's participation; child-friendly legal framework; town-wide Children's rights strategy; children's Rights unit; Child impact assessment and evaluation; regular town's Children report and Independent Advocacy for children were the key elements of child friendliness in Tafawa Balewa. Also, the study revealed that, the overall percentages demonstrating adherence to the integration of the different CFC elements are relatively poor, an indication that Tafawa Balewa is not child friendly.

Therefore, the study recommends that policy makers should develop a comprehensive child friendly strategy/plan for the integration of the Child-friendly elements in Tafawa Balewa town. The development of a Child Friendly Tafawa Balewa strategy/plan would be a first step to put children on the agenda, organize priorities and create a plan for a Child Friendly Tafawa Balewa.

Also, the Tafawa Balewa local government administrators, in partnership with the state government, should create public awareness of children as human beings rather than human becoming. This is to emphasize the need for the notion of citizenship to include much more than a framework of adult to rights if children are to participate effectively as community contributors. In addition, the educational institutions, examination bodies and other experts responsible for the development of school curriculum should review Primary, Junior and senior Secondary school

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curriculum to accommodate the Child Rights education and provide excellent opportunity to connect children with nature through teaching strategies, field trips and green school grounds.

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