
**CHILD ABUSE AND STUDENTS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN
BOKI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF CROSS RIVER STATE**

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ABSTRACT: *Child abuse is an act of inflicting serious, physical injury and emotional torture on a child or person, which is intentional or unintentional and could endanger the physical, health, emotional, social, moral and educational wellness of the child. The contributing factor of child abuse can be identified as poverty and ignorance on the part of the parents or guardians and others. Observing the alarming endless cry of students and those hurt in the process and maltreatment, the researcher was therefore interested in investigating child abuse as it affect the academic performance of students in Boki LGA of Cross River State. To achieve this purpose two (2) null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. A sample of 200 respondents were randomly selected for the study. The selection was done through simple random sampling technique. The questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. Test re-test reliability of the instrument was established, while Pearson product moment correlation analysis was the statistical technique considered appropriate. The critical level of .05 was used to test each hypothesis. The result of the analysis revealed that child physical abuse and sexual abuse were statistically related to students' academic performance. Based on the findings recommendations were made on the need to affectionate and intensified campaigns for awareness creation on the menace of child abuse – physical and sexual abuse as they deaden the future of the child, family and society.*

KEYWORDS: *Child, abuse, students, academic, performance*

INTRODUCTION

Child abuse has become an apparent endless and vicious cycle that hurts the image of the country and the dignity of those involved. Child abuse can occur in a child's home or in the originations, schools or communities the child interacts with. There are four major categories of child abuse: regret, physical abuse psychological or emotional abuse and sexual abuse, child maltreatment as any act as series of acts of commission by a parent or other caregiver that results in harm, potential of harm, or threat of harm to a child (Leeb, Paulozzi, Melanson, Simon & Anas, 2008).

According to the journal of child abuse and neglect, child abuse is “any recent act or caretaker which result in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm”.

Therefore child abuse is caused by poverty and lack or parental care, other factors include unemployment, marital conflicts and polygamous homes. Accordingly Denga(2002) also observed that child abuse is exposing children to painful and unwarranted suffering knowingly or unknowingly. She continues that both male and female children are abused in some cases by their parents, guardians, teachers, peers and the society in various forms.

In Nigeria and other African countries children born with mental or physical challenges are seen as bad luck and shameful happening. The physical and mentally challenged children may be hidden or kept at the back of the house out of view of visitors. They are usually denied their freedom of access to school and play as well as being seen and interacted with like any other child in the home. It is a form of abuse, neglect and rejection of the child that cannot be bought from the market (Denga, 2007). Thus the physically challenged child is not only stigmatized and discriminated by society but also psychological and emotional depression. Hence, the rusty occasioned parent-child conflicts in the family, the economic situation, characterized by the entrenched poverty of the vast majority of people has affected the well-being of the Nigeria child in his/her development, protection and participation in communal growth.

Furthermore, human history is littered with stories of adult brutality and wickedness to children. Children had very few rights in regards to protection from abuse by their parents. Historically, fathers had virtually unlimited rights in regard to their children and how they chose to discipline them. In many cultures, such as in Ancient Rome, a father could legally kill his children, many cultures have also allowed fathers to sell their children into slavery, child sacrifice – the ritualistic killing of children in order to please a god or supernatural beings was practiced in pre-Columbian societies of the Americans (<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news2013>).

Child abuse also poses ethical concerns related to confidentiality, as victims may be physically or psychologically unable to report abuse to authorities. Here, medical professionals including doctors, therapist and other mental health workers typically owe a duty of confidentiality to their patients and clients, either by law and by the standards or professional ethics and cannot disclose personal information without the consent of the individual concerned. Thus this duty conflict with an ethical obligation to protect children from preventable harm (National Centre for Youth Law 2011-12-29). There are untold stories of varieties of abuse against children, such as female genital mutilation, child murder and rituals, child torture, infanticide, child soldierism, child trafficking, child suicide bombers and other forms of cruelty (Denga, 2002). It has also been observed that many malnourished, weak and unkempt children are traded away by parents for economic purposes or as a sheer means of getting rid of them.

Similarly, the development and progress of any nation is hinged on the quality of its citizens. Child abuse deprives a nation or community the opportunities of developing its citizens' full potential and benefiting from such talent for the needed manpower necessary for national development. Many children who have been abused in any form develop some sort of psychological issue. These issues may include anxiety, depression, eating disorders, co-dependency or even a lack of human connections. There is also a slight tendency for children who have been abused to become child abusers themselves. In US in 2013, of the 294,000 reported child abuse cases only 81,124 received any sort of counselling or therapy. Treatment is greatly important for abused children (National Children's Alliance "National Statistics on Child Abuse"). Hence the greatest problem of child abuse is to deny the child right to education for proper personality development. It is also possible that those perpetuating the crimes in society at large may be ignorant and may not have the right perception of the problem of abuse and its effect on the academic performance of the children. It is possible

that, those who are enlightened (educated enough) may be taking in this practice perhaps ignorantly.

In Cross River State and Boki local government in particular, many dimensions of child abuse are observed, such as: child prostitution, sexual abuse, physical abuse, hawking, child labour/servitude, child trafficking, female circumcision, child rejection and neglect. This disturb the minds of many who live in fear, anxiety and worries about the child future academically; and feel that there is so much advancement in human civilization. Therefore the issue of child abuse in any form ought to be put to an end; to ensure that all live in peace and harmony in society with a focus on the basic needs of the child education being one of the main focus of the society and growth of its citizens. Hence, the study is aimed at investigating child abuse based on physical and sexual abuse and academic performance of students in Boki local government area of Cross River State.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bowlby's attachment theory (1958) and Bandura's social learning theory (1977) form the bases of this work. Bowlby's intra-theory sated that if a child was separated from its mother within the first five years of life, it could affect the child's emotional development and social difficulties in later life. The theory emphasizes the physical aspect of mother child bonding and sees the attachment as an instructive, genetically determine two way and a symbolic process. The implication of this theory to this study is that, parents should love and care for their children, instead of humiliating an torturing their young minds with all sort of abuse. This will enable the child to interact freely, thereby improving their academic performance.

Bandura's social learning theory (1977) emphasizes that part of what a person learns is through imitation or modeling and that learning takes place in a social situation. During interaction an individual may learn to modify his behaviour a as result of how others in the group are responding. Bandura sees behaviour as internal cognitive structure and the environment as interacting factor, so that each act as an interlocking determinant of the other (Bandura. 1978). He believed that children learn through observation or copying and watching carefully the behaviour of adults, be they their biological parents, caregivers or adults around them, as their models. Thus, where their models perceived abuse of children as a perfect way of life, that must be practice, they grow up with these experiences and tend to be abusers themselves. Likewise children who watch parents or caregivers practice physical abuse as corrective measures, may grow up to practice correcting issues with the child through beating, plucking the ears, drawing the hair, kneeling for long hours and withdrawing of essential needs when demanded. As a result they learn the art of neglect and would not provide of their educational needs or even sow love and affection to others. Those who grow up under such brutal conditions seem to practice same, as they see human beings as tool of oppression and satisfaction of personal desires. The relevant of this theory is based on the emphasis that attention, care, love, protection should be given to the child to help motivate positive behaviours and learning outcome.

Statement of problems

The increasing number of students and pupils and those out of school hawking and selling goods around the streets and school premises in all rural areas in Boki local government area is alarming. Some of the children look so malnourished and sick, others in pain of being hurt

by beatings and assaulted by gangsters. Some of these children are sent out there by their parents or caregivers, the interest of most parents is what the child can bring to the home through sells (hawking goods) or giving oneself for money; many leave school as early as primary school, age 12 to engage in prostitution while others are used as house helps and other menial jobs to bring in money to the family. As a result the moral and social development of the child has no education base, their performance in school is affected. The child is therefore a tool for profit making. It is against this background that the study is carried out to investigate the relationship between child abuse and academic performance of students in Boki local government area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

The main purpose of the study was to examine child abuse and academic performance of secondary school students in JSSIII in Boki local government area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The study was specifically aimed at investigating whether (i) physical abuse of children has any relationship with the academic performance of students; (ii) sexual abuse of children has any relationship with the academic performance of students.

Literature review was carried out according – physical abuse of children and their academic performance – physical abuse is any accidental injury to a child. This involves physical aggression directed at a child by an adult. Most nations with child abuse laws considers the deliberate infliction of serious injuries or actions that place the child at obvious risk of serious injury or death to be illegal, bruises, scratches burns, broken bones, lacerations, as well as repeated “mishaps” and rough treatment that could cause physical injury, can be physical abuse (Theoklitou, Kabitshis & Kabitsi, 2012). Multiple injuries or fractures at different stages of healing can raise suspicion of abuse. Physical abuse can come in many forms, although the distinction between child discipline and abuse is often poorly defined. However, the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations has stated that the prohibition of degrading treatment or punishment extends to corporal punishment of children (UN Human Rights Committee, 1992).

Since 1979, 34 countries around the world (at 2013) have outlawed domestic corporal punishment of children (Global Initiative to End Corporal Punishment of Children - GITEACFOC). In Europe, 22 countries have banned the practice. Cultural norms about what constitutes abuse vary widely: among professionals as well as the wider public, people do not agree on what behaviours constitutes abuse (Noh, 1994).

Some professionals claim that cultural norms that sanction physical punishment are ones of the causes of child abuse, and have undertaken campaigns to redefine such norms (Barth, 1994). Psychologist Alice Miller, for her books on child abuse took the view that humiliations, spanking and beatings, slaps in the face, etc are all forms of abuse, because they injure the integrity and dignity of a child, even if their consequences are not visible right away (<http://www.alice-miller.com>). A long term study of adults retrospectively reporting adverse childhood experiences including verbal, physical and sexual abuse, as well as other forms of childhood trauma found 25.9% adults reported verbal abuse as children, 12.2% of adults reported sexual abuse. Data from the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Behavioural Risk Factor Surveillance System corroborate these high rates (<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml.lmm>). There is a high correlation between number of different adverse childhood experiences and risk for poor health outcomes in adult

including cancer, heart attack, marital illness, reduced longevity, drug and alcohol abuse (Byrne & Carrier, 2011).

Isangedighi (2005) pointed out that child physical abuse is a global phenomenon, in United States of America (USA) for instance about 14% of children are physically abused yearly and out of those who are abused an estimated 20,000 die as a result of the abuse. Averages of 1,000 to 5,000 children die each year in USA as a result of injuries arising from maltreatment. Child physical abuse may result to improper education of the child, loss of opportunities in life, poor performance in school, dropping out of school, fear, anxieties, depression and even develop in the affected child low self-esteem. These indices are negative indicators of good academic performance of students. The abused child can also suffer from post traumatic stress disorder if they see someone else being abused. While some teenagers experience violence in their relationship.

Sexual abuse and academic performance

Sexual abuse is passive in every part of the world. According to United Nation BBC reported in September 2014 that 1 in 10 girls had experienced sexual violence at early stage of their life time (Herrenkohl, 2005). Child sexual abuse is one of the health and human right challenges in Nigeria. The National Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) report in 2008 suggest that over 25% of adolescents in Nigeria often experience the first sexual abuse at the age of 15 (NDHS, 2014). However cases reported of the law enforcement agents of Nigeria (Nigeria Police) are less than unreported cases by parents or guidance of the victims. The News Agency of Nigeria reported in 2013 that 1,200 girls were raped in Cross River State, a coastal state in south south Nigeria, that share a common border with Cameroon to the east (Vanguard News, 2014).

In the United States, approximately 15% to 25% of women and 5% to 15% of men were sexually abused when they were children. Most sexual offenders are acquainted with their victims approximately 30% are relatives of the child, most often brothers, fathers, mothers, uncles, or cousins, around 60% are other acquaintances such as friends of the family, babysitters or neighbours, strangers are the offenders in approximately 10% of child sexual abuse cases. In over one-third of the cases, the perpetrator is also a minor (Whealin, 2007; Finkelhor, David, Richar & Chaffin, 2009).

Furthermore, in 1999 the BBC reported on the RAHI Foundation's survey of sexual abuse in India, in which 76% of respondents said they had been abused as children, 40% of those stating the perpetrator was a family member (India's hidden incest, BBC News, 1999). Similarly, in many cases abusers are male, about 20 percent of all sexual abusers are female (Bagley & Thurston, 1996). Such abuse can be sexual teasing and fondling, which invokes confusion and shame or more blatant abuse. Boys obviously are spared the problem of unwanted pregnancy that many sexually abused girls experience, but they often turn their anger outward. An estimated 30 to 50 percent of child molesters are adolescents boys who had been abused themselves (Jones, Robin, Schlank, Anita & LeGuin Louis, 1999).

In some countries, specifically Nigeria, Boko Inclusive, the practice of marrying underage children makes it inevitable for young teenage girls to be sexually abuse, under the name of marriage. Poverty and lack of parental care are the major causes of child sexual abuse or child molestation in Nigeria. Imona (2006) ascertain that sexual abuse is not gender

restricted. In some areas of southern Asia, especially Pakistan, underage boys are used as homo sexual partners to older men. While in some cases children are sexually violated by their own parents or family members. These practices tend to bring shame, discomfort, depression, anxiety, fear and hinder the child academic performance generally, as those involve fear being exposed and name calling can also lead to withdrawal from active class activities.

METHODOLOGY

The design adopted for this study was survey research design. The targeted population involve in this study consisted of all junior secondary school three (JSS3) students in all the secondary schools in Boki local government area of Cross River State. The simple random sampling technique was adopted and used to select the sample for the study (using a 30% for the overall population to draw the respondent for the study; five secondary schools were drawn. And 8% of the population was used as sample of the study).

The research instrument which was the questionnaire comprised of sixteen (16) items all of the likert type 4-point scale. The respondents were required to tick their level of agreement for each statement. In terms of validity two experts from psychology of education and three from educational measurement research and evaluation, affirmed that the instrument was suitable for measuring what it purported to measure. Using the test-retest method, the reliability index of the instrument ranges from 0.76 to 0.83. Data were collected through the use of questionnaire from the sampled schools. Through the administrative head (principal) and with the assistance of some teachers, all the 200 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and were all properly completed. The following hypotheses were tested in the study: (a) There is no significant relationship between physical abuse of children and academic performance of students; (b) Sexual abuse of children has no significant relationship with academic performance of students.

RESULTS

Hypothesis one: There is no significant relationship between physical abuse children and their academic performance. The independent variable in the hypothesis is physical abuse of children while the dependent variable is academic performance of students. Pearson product moment correlation analysis was deployed to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in table one (1).

Table 1
Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between physical abuse of children and their academic performance (N = 200)

Variable	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	r-value
	$\sum y$	$\sum y^2$		
Physical abuse	3682	6089	90758	0.54*
Academic performance	3316	5486		

* significance at 0.5 level, critical $r = 138$, $df = 198$.

The result in table one indicates that, the calculated r-value of .138 at .05 level of significance, with 198 degrees of freedom. This result therefore shows that physical abuse of children has a significant relationship with their academic performance.

Hypothesis two: Sexual abuse of children has no significant relationship with their academic performance. The independent variable in this hypothesis is sexual abuse, while the dependent variable is academic performance. Pearson product moment correlation analysis was used to test the hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in table 2.

Table 2

Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between sexual abuse and academic performance (N = 200)

Variable	$\sum x$ $\sum y$	$\sum x^2$ $\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r-value
Sexual abuse	3598	3985	89612	0.56*
Academic performance	3316	5486		

* significance at 0.5 level, critical r = .138, df = 198.

The result in table two shows that the calculated r-value of 0.56 is higher than the critical r-value of .138 at .05 level of significance with 198 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. The result therefore revealed that sexual abuse has a significant relationship with students' academic performance.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The result of the analysis revealed that physical abuse of children has a significance relationship with their academic performance. The finding was in line with the views of Theoklitou, Kabitsis & Kabitsi (2012). They consider physical abuse as the deliberate infliction of serious injuries or actions that place the child at obvious risk of serious injury or death, to be illegal – bruises, scratches, burns, broken bones, lacerations, as well as reported “mishaps” and rough treatment that could cause physical injury. It could also affect the child academic performance and interest. Isangedighi (2005) also pointed out that child physical abuse is a global phenomenon, in United States of America (USA) for instance, about 14% of children are physically abused yearly and out of those who are abused an estimated 20,000 die as a result of the abuse. An average of 1,000 to 5,000 children die each year in USA as a result of injuries arising from maltreatment. Similarly, in a long term study of adult retrospectively reporting adverse childhood experiences including verbal, physical and sexual abuse, as well as other forms of childhood trauma found 25.9% adults reported verbal abuse as children, 14.8% of adults report physical abuse, 12.2% of adults reported sexual abuse (Data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention - CDC). Hence, child physical abuse may result to improper education of the child, loss of opportunities in life, poor performance in school and eventual dropping out of school.

While the result on sexual abuse and academic performance revealed that sexual abuse has a significant relationship with students academic achievement. The findings was in agreement with the reports of the National Demographic Health Survey report in 2008, that over 25% of adolescents in Nigeria often experience the first sexual act at the age of 15. However, cases reported of the law enforcement agents of Nigeria (Nigeria police) are less than unreported cases by parents or guardians of the victims. Also the News agency of Nigeria reported in

2013 that 1,200 girls were raped in Cross River State, a coastal state in south south Nigeria, that share a common border with Cameroon to the east (Vanguard News, 2014). Similarly in Nigeria, Boki LGA specifically, the tradition and practice of marrying under-age children makes it inevitable for young teenage girls to be sexually abused under the name of marriage. Putting a total stop of the child dreams for education and academic work but a diversion to family life of child caring and domestic activities resulting to final enslavement of the child.

Counselling recommendations

Counselors, in conjunction with parents, caregivers, government and entire society should adopt good parental care, love and concern for their children, and mention good societal values, morals and norms, which should be subject to change. The cry of school dropout, gangsterism, unemployment should be redress and jobs created for youth to enable the young ones achieved their goals focus and dreams of a better tomorrow.

Family ties of old should be revisited to avoid marital conflict and good Christian virtue be put into practice. To prevent polygamy and the eventful crisis of it out come – step fathers, brothers harassment of step sisters; likewise uncles to be educated on the need to show love rather than harm.

The family and society in general should be more security conscious on the whereabouts of the child. Be interested in their welfare, dialogue issues of conflict, giving room for peace and harmony to reign at home, school and society.

Government and non-governmental agencies should create awareness campaign exercise to discourage parents from leasing out their children for housekeeping, prostitution, early marriage, or any other reason for money making. Also the government should make sure that perpetrators of these vices are punished according to the law enacted for offenders and used as examples for others whose cases may not be reported; as many of these incident are under close.

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