

**THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
AGAINST CHILDREN IN SOUTH WEST NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT.....

This study investigated the psychological effects of domestic Violence against children in Southwest Nigeria. The research design used for the study was the descriptive research design of the survey type. Nine Hundred children of school age who have either dropped out of school or have not had the opportunity to attend school and suffer various degrees of violence and neglect selected through purposive sampling technique formed the sample for this study. The samples were taken from three randomly selected state capital cities in South West Nigeria. The research instrument used in this study was a self-designed instrument titled, "Questionnaire on Child Violence and neglect". Face and content validities of the instrument were ensured, and the reliability of the instrument was established at a value of 0.85 using the test re-test reliability method. The inferential statistical technique used for data analysis in this study was Pearson product moment correlation coefficient to test the two hypotheses generated for the study. The result of the analysis revealed that there was a significant relationship between domestic violence and psychological development of children. It was also found that a significant relationship existed between parental perception of education and child violence in Southwest Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended that psychological needs of children be provided for by parents and other care givers by providing enabling and suitable environment for them to grow. Also, parents should endeavour to send their children to school rather than exposing them to all forms of abuse and neglect.

Key Words: Child violence and neglect, Psychological Challenges, Parental Perception, education, Domestic Violence.

INTRODUCTION

Child violence and neglect is not a new phenomenon in the society. What is rather new is the dimension it is assuming and the great proportion of attention the phenomenon is gaining in the media, and from private and public institutions. History has recorded practices of every form of domestic violence throughout the world with impunities and socialized cultures.

The word child violence and neglect has so wide definition that many parents and guidance may already have been abusing their children or wards without knowing. According to Awe (1955), what a person may do to be guilty of child violence ranges from sending a child on an errand that exposes him to dangers he is not old enough to watch out for, through giving him drinks that have strong alcoholic contents, inflicting bodily harm on him, either punishment or in moment of rage. This is in line with Child Welfare Information Gateway (2007) that sees violence against children as the deliberate and willful injury on a child by a care-giver through hitting, beating with belt, cord or other objects, slamming against a wall, burning with cigarettes, scolding with hot water, locking in dungeons, torturing and even killing. It also involves active, hostile and aggressive physical treatment.

In China, girl babies were drowned, in Egypt, children were buried alive to serve deceased persons in after life, In ancient Rome, fathers had the right to sell, mutilate or kill their children. In ancient Calabar (Nigeria) Twins were killed, as culture did not favour their existence. In medieval England, boys and girls between the ages of five and fourteen were hired out as labour hands during the early days of industrialization, brokers sprang up to traffic in children who worked from five in the morning till ten at night.

In ancient Greek and Roman Societies, young children were frequently made to join adults' sexual activities, including the castrating of infants for later services in brothels. A variety of children's fortune and victuals have long been associated with religious rites, sometimes resulting in permanent deformation, injury or death of the ward.

Nutrition and health care violence involve starvation, inadequate feeding and lack of attention to the health of the child. General weakness, lack of energy and debilitating illness are treated with little concern. Medical violence occurs in self-prescription inflicted on the child and deliberate act to withhold proper medical attention from the child in most ailments until the condition has grossly deteriorate. Educational child violence concerns the practice of exposing the child to harm and retardation in development by withholding necessary materials he needs in the educational process; or putting him too early into the educational process when the body organs are not ready. This includes early entry into pre-school facilities for mere babies who are forced to read, write and learn formal school work. Attending school without materials, books, pens, uniform, desks, or under poor classroom lighting and other facilities constitute educational violence. Getting to school at the wrong hours from home, not having enough teaching / learning periods because of absence of the teacher are educational abuses. In the course of educational violence, the whole future of the child in formal learning is jeopardized or damaged.

Child labour is one form of violence against children which involves the use of children to work, such as mining, farming, hawking and hunting. Children do a lot of work in widely divergent conditions, which could be beneficial by promoting the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development without interfering with schooling, recreating and rest. When opposite of this happens, it is destructive or exploitative. At this end no one would probably argue that exploring children is acceptable under any circumstance. This can be said to be "bounded child labour" which is virtually enslavement of children to repay debts incurred by their parents or grand parents (UNICEF, 1997).

Similarly, Johnson, Hills and Smith (1995) stated that domestic work done by children can be beneficial. That is, children learn from a reasonable level of participation in household chores, subsistence food growing and income generating activities. They also derive a sense of worth from their work with their families. On the contrary, work for the family may demand too much of children, requiring them to work long hours that keep them away from school and take too great a toll on the developing bodies. Such work can prevent children from exercising their rights and developing to their full potential.

To treat all work by children as equally unacceptable is to confuse and trivialise the issue and to make it more difficult to end the abuse. This is why UNICEF (1997) distinguished between beneficial and intolerable work and recognized that much child labour falls into a grey area between those two extremes. UNICEF asserts that, child labour is exploitative if it involves:

- * Full time work at too early an age i.e. before 18
- * Too many hours spent working
- * Work that exerts undue physical, social or psychological stress
- * Work and live on the streets in bad condition.
- * Work that undermines children dignity and self-esteem i.e. slavery bounded labour.
- * Work that is detrimental to full social and psychological development (UNICEF, 1997)

Another way by which children could be abused is through child domestic service and violence, child domestic workers are the world's most forgotten children. Worldwide, millions of children toil in obscurity in private homes, behind doors as domestic workers. Of all the work children do, the most common is agriculture or domestic work within their own families. Most families around the world expect their children to help in the household. Whether preparing food, fetching water, herding animals or caring for younger siblings (UNICEF 1997).

In South West Nigeria, children begin helping with domestic chores well before school age. Girls must fetch the household water and boys firewood. Children of both sexes help with farm work, keep shops and sometimes work in formal sector of the rural –economy including traditional crafts and small trades (Sahazar, Christima and Walter, 1995).

Children in domestic service may well be the most vulnerable and exploited children of all, as well as the most difficult to protect. They are often poorly paid or

not paid at all, their conditions of work are most times at the will of their employers which take no account of their legal rights. They are deprived of schooling and they are vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse (UNICEF, 1992, UNESCO, 1993).

The employer often regards sexual abuse as part of employment terms, her resistance creates a situation that leads to her being beaten. Medical and legal evidences show that the alleged perpetrators of sexual abuse were domestic employer at the child's home (Baribwira, Muteganya and Ndiokulways, 1994). Even when not sexually abused, child domestics can suffer severe damage in terms of their psychological and social development. They are often cut off from the community, denied rest and play, childhood has been stolen from these children. Bill (1990), in his presentation to ILO on domestic service, gave a case report on Marie, a 7 year old girl from Haiti who was handed over by a poor rural family to live with and provide domestic help for an urban wealthy family.

A good number of these domestic servants are poorly treated, in the South West Nigeria, domestic servants are made to wake up early enough before any member of the family, sometimes as early as 5 o'clock in the morning and begin their days by fetching water from brooks, river and wells as the case may be. They would have to prepare breakfast and serve it to the members of the family. They take the family sibling to school and in between meal times they must run other errands such as hawking, washing cloth, tidying up the environment, toilet and bathroom. Upon the whole, they feed from left over meals, cloth in rags and wear no shoe in most cases. They are beaten regularly and terribly whenever they commit error or slow to requests or considered disrespectful. Needless to say that they are not allowed to attend school and denied rest as they wake up early and go to bed late.

Today domestic violence is recognized as a serious social problem in the United States of America. Researchers estimate that between 3.3 million and 18 million children are exposed to domestic violence each year and that this exposure can have significant negative effect on children's emotional, social and cognitive development (David and Lucile, 2000). Violence is seen as a major consequence of domestic labour. Though, research examining the effect of child exposure to domestic violence is limited by methodological problems, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that such exposure has adverse effect (UNICEF, 1997).

Domestic violence continues to neglect the rights of women and girls in all countries and it undermines the lives of one of every two women in some countries. Such violence continues to cut across cultures, class, education, incomes, ethnic and age in every country. In many families where domestic violence is present, multiple problems exist including poverty, substance abuse, and exposure to other forms of violence such as child maltreatment. In 30% to 60% of families experiencing either domestic violence or child maltreatment, the other form of violence is present (UNICEF, 2000). The effect on child development is severe poor nutrition (since it is rare that a child in this energy share equally in the family needs), sexual abuse living in fear and anxiety (UNICEF, 1997).

The link between the commercial sexual exploitation of children and other forms of exploitative labour are numerous. In consonance with this, Jacobs, Charles,

Mohamed and Athie, (1994) said that research has consistently indicated that child abuse and incest are common precursors of commercial sexual exploitation of children in addition to people who actually buy sex, these are the traffickers, agents and intermediaries who profit from the sale of children for sex, Nepalese carpet factories (where 50% of the workers are estimated to be children) are common sales of sexual exploitation by employers as well as recruitment centres for India brothels (UNICEF 1997).

The sexual exploitation of children is now a feature of economic life in South Western Nigeria. It is observed in recent time that a good number of children either live in brothels or stay by the road side where they could easily be picked up to serve their prospective customers over the night, an act popularly referred to as an "aristo" or in some instances are used as servers in bear parlours or restaurants where they are easily picked up for sexual manipulation for money, Odu and Ayodele (2007).

Adedoyin and Adegoke (1995) are of the opinion that an increasing proportion of adolescent in Nigeria are engaging in teenage prostitution. In a survey on prevalence and characteristics of teenage prostitution in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, found out that children sexual abuse perhaps lead to prostitution and that two of the sample in the study had their sexual experience early in life and about the same number lived with their parents when they began prostitution. A case study of Enugu reports that an estimated one million children enter the illegal sex market each year. Many are kidnapped, sold, deceived or otherwise trafficked into forced sexual encounter. The physical and psychological damage inflicted by commercial sexual exploitation makes it one of the most hazardous forms of child labour. Supporting the above UNICEF (1997) adds that no matter how high the wages or how few the hours, the children involved have to confront serious health risks everyday including respiratory diseases, HIV, STD, unwanted pregnancy, drug addiction (UNICEF, 1997).

Aderinto (2000) in considering another form of child abuse lists seven main categories of street children in Nigeria cities to include:

1. **Load Carriers:** Found mostly in the markets, truck and bus station and other places where economic activities thrive, they carry luggage in baskets or wheelbarrows for their clients. They are mostly boys between 9-16 years of age.
2. **The Almajiris:** Found on many streets in the northern states. They could be identified by their haggard, tattered looks and carrying of calabashes, plastics or bowls in case they are given alms or foods.
3. **The Hawkers:** who represent the targets group of street children. They sell on the streets, dashing between cars. There are also door-to-door hawkers who enter homes and offices.
4. **Child Prostitutes:** Children who are found around major streets in cities in the evening. Found in pats around hotels and cinema soliciting for sexual patronage.
5. **The beggars:** Usually children of those that are handicapped. They become destitute themselves and learn to beg on their own.

6. **The touts and bus conductors:** Those in this group are found near motor parks, railway stations and airports. Though they earn money, they don't mind stealing travelers' luggage or pick pockets.
7. **The disabled Children:** Found in groups among adult-disabled persons. Some parents leaving out their disabled children in the morning and coming to pick them and collect the day's earnings.

Statement of the Problem

In the South Western Nigeria, it is noted that the abuse of street children is common. Most of them are being physically attacked and psychologically assaulted. Again, street life is also highly dangerous for street girls as there are wide spread sexual offences, abuse and violence against them as a good number of them constantly fall victim of rape and sexual coarsion and where resisted sometimes are killed or sustain serious injures.

Violence against children is an everyday occurrence and it comes in several forms. While the most commonly identified are domestic violence and rape, there have since been several more specific forms of acts identified as gender-based violence. These include children in conflict situations, trafficking in children, early marriage female genital mutilation, sexual assault etc.

Children have had this physical mental, and emotional violence inflicted upon them by family members, acquaintance or a stranger under the guice of religion, cultural practices and other forms of social discrimination,. Others are a result of merely inflicting mental, economic and physical superiority over a child.

The patriarchal nature of many of our societies particularly the South Western Nigeria permits children to be subjected to many of these practices. In some communities, the elders will look you straight in the eye and say that what the world terms as violence is actually a valued cultural practice. Take female genital mutilation for instance. It is erroneously believed to be a way to curb promiscuity among young girls. As a matter of fact the practice has proven to be a health hazard and hindrance to a futilling sexual life.

Based on the statement of the problem the following hypotheses are generated.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between child violence and psychological development
2. There is no significant relationship between parental perception of education and child violence.

Methodology

This is a descriptive research of the survey type. This plan of study in which descriptive research design is used is considered appropriate because it focuses on the observation and perception of the existing situation.

The population for the study is made up of all children in South Western Nigeria. South Western Nigeria is made up of six states below the Niger with many villages and big cities with tick population.

Nine Hundred (900) children who suffer various degrees of violence and neglect participated in the study through the purposive sampling technique. For the purpose, three state capital cities were randomly selected from the total number of six state capital cities in South West Nigeria.

The instrument used was a self-designed instrument titled "Questionnaire on Child violence and Neglect" (QCVN). The instrument was divided into two major sections of A and B. section a was made up of the personal data of the respondents which comprises age, location, town, local government area and sex. Section B of the instrument was made up of items designed to elicit responses from children of school ages who were either forced out of school to work to contribute to the family economy or had never attended school and who suffered one form of violence or the other on their psychological development.

The principal investigator administered the instrument with the assistance of associate researchers who had been specially trained in the skill of administering the instrument on abused and neglected children of both sexes.

Data Analysis:

Descriptive statistical techniques used were means and standard deviation. Inferential statistical technique used to analyse the data collected was Pearson Product Moment Correlation. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

This section presents the results of the data analysis for the study. The results were presented according to the hypotheses which guided the study as shown in table 1 and 2.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between child abuse and psychological development of children.

Table 1: Correlation between child violence and psychological development of children.

Variables	N	r-cal	r-tab
Child Violence	900	0.4516	0.195
Psychological Development	900		

P < 0.05 (Significant Result)

Hypothesis 2: There is no significance relationship between Parental Perception of education and child violence.

Table 2: Correlation between parental perception of education and child violence

Variables	N	r-cal	r-tab
Parental Perception of Education	900	0.3612	0.195
Child Violence	900		

P < 0.05 (Significant Result)

Table 1 shows that r -calculated to be 0.4516 and r -tabled to be 0.195. H_0 is rejected, since r -calculated is higher than r -tabled. Therefore there is a significant relationship between child violence and psychological development of children.

Table 2 shows that r -calculated to be 0.3612 and r -tabled 0.195. H_0 is rejected since r -calculated of 0.3612 value is higher than r -tabled of 0.195 value. Therefore there is a significant relationship between parental perception of education and child violence.

Discussion

The result of hypothesis 1 shows that there is a significant relationship between child violence and psychological development of children because the probability of poor psychological development of children exposed to various forms of violence is higher than that of children who enjoy protection from parents and other relations and not exposed to any manner of violence or neglect. Children who are abused and neglected suffer all forms of psychological devastations which include depression, low self-concept, anxiety aggression, lack of love, and others because they had been exposed to all manners of social vices early enough. This finding supports the earlier report of UNICEF (1997) which established that childhood exposure to abuse can be associated with increased display of aggression, increased emotional problems such as depression and anxiety, lower level of social competence and poorer academic functioning. The finding also corroborates the finding of David and Lucile (2000) who opined that abuse, neglect and violence have significant negative effect on children's emotional, social and cognitive development of children who are so exposed.

The result of hypothesis 2 shows that there is a significant relationship between parental perception of education and child violence. The study reveals a significant result in the relationship between the two variables. In essence, the negative perception of majority of parents about the education of their children based on the fact that they are too poor to afford the rising cost of education. Also they did not see education as having short time reward but long time reward is making them to look at acquisition of education with apathy. They would therefore prefer to send out their children to the street to do all manner of things to support their income as a means of survival. This no doubt reveals that most of those children who have no access to education and good quality of life often stand a greater risk of being exposed to violence and neglect.

Education is concerned with the training of the intellect; it involves everything that leads to positive living of the individuals and all their influences which help the growing individual. Education which is the acquisition of experience for development of individual and the welfare of the society is however the right of every child, but were not taken seriously by the parents, it poses a dangerous threat to the future of the children in particular and the society in general.

This finding supports the work of giant (1994) who found out that parents who view education with apathy provide bad child-rearing strategies associated with poor

developmental functioning and lower educational achievement among children which can expose them all forms of violence.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The prevalent exposure of children to the avoidable social misfortune called child violence and neglect with its attendant dangers is on the increase today. When one goes out, one sees the alarming rate at which children engage in petty-trading and street begging, while some hawk for their parents and guardians when they should be laying a solid foundation for their future. Parents leave their children at home uncared for and run after money, thereby exposing them to various forms of violence such as rape, child prostitution, battering and psychological assault.

In a country like Nigeria some social-economic problems and harmful cultural/traditional factors militate against the survival, development, protection, integration and participation of children in social processes and opportunities available in the environment.

The reasons for these can be attributed to, among others, deprivation of basic emotional needs largely due to parental absence from home in pursuit of economic survival. Negative perception of education by parents which leads to deprivation of childhood or early education leading to gender-gap in education which is capable of exposing the children to abuses and neglect.

Often, the severe psychological damage to abused children does not surface until adolescence or later, when many abused children become abusing parents. An adult who was abused as a child often has trouble establishing intimate personal relationships. These men and women may have trouble with physical closeness, touching, intimacy and trust as adults. They are also at higher risk for anxiety, depression, substance abuse, mental illness, fear, low self-concept among others.

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that the psychological needs of children be provided for by parents and other care-givers by showing love, affection, trust and providing conducive environment for them to grow. Also their physical and psychological protection should be ensured through the provision of social welfare programmes.

Again, parents should be orientated on the need to change their attitude towards education and endeavour to send their children to school rather than sending them into slavery to make money to support their income thereby exposing them to all forms of dangers. It is also necessary for the government to empower the less privileged parents to eradicate poverty from their lives as this will enable them meet the needs of their children.

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