

The Impact of Domestic Violence on School Children: A Study of Selected Secondary Schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria

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Review Article

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is the intentional and persistent abuse of anyone in the home in a way that causes pain, distress or injury. This research examined the impact of domestic violence on secondary school children with specific interest in the learning processes and outcome. Using the survey research design, questionnaires were distributed to 200 respondents cutting across 4 secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. Responses from 174 students were analysed with simple percentage using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 20.0 and the Chi-square test. Results showed that secondary school children are exposed to significantly high levels of various forms of domestic violence. Domestic violence was found to have a significant adverse impact on the learning outcomes of secondary school students. As such, it was recommended that all stakeholders (parents, guardians, teachers and school administrations) should be made aware of the impact of domestic violence on children. Also, mental and psychological help or services should be provided for children who have been victimized from episodes of domestic violence. Finally, funding from central and local governments as well as non-governmental organizations should be re-addressed as financial resources is crucial in order implement all other recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is the intentional and persistent abuse of anyone in the home in a way that causes pain, distress or injury [1]. As a social malady, domestic violence cuts across both the developed and developing nations of the world. Given it's global nature, domestic violence has caught the attention of relevant stakeholders including national and state governments of countries, both local and international health organizations, child right groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and of course the academics. As such, The United Nations Children's Fund [2] asserts that domestic violence is a global problem of enormous proportions. For Adebayo [3], domestic violence transcends national, cultural, racial and class boundaries.

One of the most basic features of domestic violence is that it takes place within the home or family which is has been variously identified as the first context of socialization of the child [4,5]. This places children as a vulnerable group in the center of domestic violence witnessing violence; exposed to violence; experiencing direct abuse; hearing or seeing violence; and living with domestic violence. As such, Aihie [1] points out that children are often principal victims of domestic violence. In a similar perspective, Finkelhor et al. [6] acknowledge that children suffer higher rates of exposure to violence and crime than do adults, and such exposure is responsible for a considerable burden of physical and mental

health morbidity. In the first ever global study on children exposure to domestic violence, UNICEF [2] report that as many as 275 million children worldwide are exposed to violence in the home.

Futures without Violence [7] points out the widely acclaimed and undisputed view that growing up in a violent home may be a terrifying and traumatic experience that can affect every aspect of a child's life, growth and development. This is because, child development is expected to occur within a secure and nurturing family and home environment. When domestic violence is present and becomes the norm, the environment is infected with tension and fear, wherein the normal tasks of growing up are likely to be adversely affected.

For Nigeria, Olupohunda [8] report that domestic violence is known to tear families apart, but the effects on children's emotional and academic development are much worse. Idogo [9] opine that early childhood victimization, either through direct abuse, neglect, or witnessing parental domestic violence, has been shown to have demonstrable long-term consequences for antisocial behaviour, youth violence, adult violence tendencies, and other forms of criminality in the long run.

Children in Nigeria are caught in the middle and exposed to domestic violence, leaving the children and the society at large have to deal with the adverse life-long sequela that comes with it. In view of the high incidence of domestic violence in Nigerian families and its adverse consequences for children it becomes imperative to identify the specific impacts it has on the children. In this regard, this study examines the multifaceted toll domestic violence exerts on in-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Children as one of the most vulnerable groups suffers a sizeable burden of the ripple effects of domestic violence. As such, Adebayo [3] posits that domestic violence as a social malady threatens the stable and balanced psychological development of children in the Nigerian society, as children raised in violent homes are known to imbibe violent tendencies as they grow up. The above view corroborates one of major findings by UNICEF [2] that is a strong likelihood that domestic violence results in a cycle of violence for the next generation, given that the single best predictor of children becoming either perpetrators or victims of domestic violence later in life is whether or not they grow up in a home where there is domestic violence.

For children who live in households with domestic violence, Imhonde et al. [10] identifies serious negative effects to include aggression, phobias, insomnia, low self-esteem, depression, low level of social competence, poor academic performance. Despite these undesirable outcomes, the UNICEF [2] in the first ever global study on domestic violence and children, points out that collecting reliable data on this hidden issue poses several challenges, as in almost every country there is limited data available on the prevalence of domestic violence, and even less information on the numbers of children who may be exposed to such violence.

For Nigeria, UNICEF Nigeria [11] report that reliable data on violence against children in Nigeria is scarce because violence is often not reported as it occurs mostly within the context where it is regarded as 'normal' such as within the family circle or behind the privacy of homes. National-wide studies as well as studies focusing on the incidence and impact of domestic violence on in-school children in Nigeria are either few or inaccessible. This is a major research gap that this study intends to fill. With focus on in-school secondary children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State, this study will establish the incidence and impacts of domestic violence on in-school children.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study primarily aims to examine the impact of domestic violence on secondary school children. In this regard, this research specifically to determine if domestic violence has a significant impact on the learning processes and outcomes of secondary school children.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The fundamental research question posed in this study is to know the impact of domestic violence on secondary school children specifically, on the learning processes and outcomes of secondary school students.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Survey research design was used in this study. The survey research design is an efficient way of collecting information from a large number of respondents and the ability to use statistical techniques to determine statistical significance [12].

Population of the Study

A population is the entire set of relevant units of analysis in which we are interested for the purpose of the study [13]. Since this study involves secondary school students in Edo State, the population of the study is defined as all secondary school students in Edo State.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample of our study comprises of students drawn from four secondary schools in Egor LGA of the Benin metropolis. The four schools chosen would be a mixture of private schools and public schools.

A total of 200 respondents were drawn from the four schools. The respondents were chosen using the simple random sampling technique from the SS2 to SS3 classes of each school. All members in the sample were drawn randomly at the various schools where the respondents were approached for participation in the study.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in the gathering data is a carefully crafted fixed-response questionnaire to elicit responses from the sampled students. The questionnaire contained well-structured questions to obtain the responses and views of the respondents on the possible forms of domestic violence they are exposed to and the resulting impacts.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections. It was designed to obtain socio-demographic information on respondents. It contained fixed-response questions measuring the perception of the responding students on the relevant issues raised in the research hypotheses and objectives of this study. The respondents were required to agree or disagree with each of the statements by ticking yes or no.

Two hundred copies of questionnaires were administered for the study. Only 174 copies were returned and properly filled, implying an 87.0% response rate. Moreover, reliability tests show that our research instrument is reliable. As such, our reliability test gives a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.849 implying a high level of internal consistency of the scales and questions in the research instrument, as it exceeds the benchmark of 0.70. The socio-demographic details of the respondents are presented first.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Socio-Demographic Analysis

In table below the socio-demographic details of the students are presented. The distribution of our respondents between private and public schools, class, as well as their gender and age distribution amongst others are presented below (Table 1).

Table 1: Socio-demographic details of respondents (Source: Spss Output from Field Survey, February, 2016).

Demographic variable	Frequency count	Relative frequency (%)	Cummulative frequency (%)
School type			
Public	94	54	54
Private	80	46	100
Total	174	100	
Class			
SS2	89	51.1	51.1
SS3	85	48.9	100
Total	174	100	
Sex			
Female	81	46.6	46.6
Male	93	53.4	100

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Total	174	100	
Age			
14 Years	17	9.8	9.8
15 Years	68	39.1	48.9
16 Years	50	28.7	77.6
17 Years	27	15.5	93.1
18 Years	11	6.3	99.4
19 Years	1	0.6	100
Total	174	100	
No of siblings			
1	13	7.5	7.5
2	19	10.9	18.4
3	24	13.8	32.2
4	83	47.7	79.9
5	26	14.9	94.8
6	9	5.2	100
Total	174	100	
Religion			
Islam	42	24.1	24.1
Christianity	132	75.9	100
Total	174	100	
Education level of father			
University	48	27.6	27.6
Secondary school	67	38.5	66.1
Primary school	35	20.1	86.2
None	24	13.8	100
Total	174	100	
Education level of mother			
University	37	21.3	21.3
Secondary school	49	28.2	49.4
Primary school	52	29.9	79.3
None	36	20.7	100
Total	174	100	

Table 1 shows that 94 (54.0%) of the respondents attend public schools, while 80 (46.0) of the respondents attend private schools. Of the total 174 respondents, 93 (53.4%) are males, while 81 (46.6%) are females. This shows that the views of respondents were fairly sought between students from private and public schools, as well as between both

genders. There are 89 (51.1%) and 81 (48.9%) respondents from the SS2 and SS3 classes respectively. Most of the respondents are either 15 years (68; 39.1%) or 16 years (50; 28.7%) of age.

Also, the table shows that most of the respondents are Christians (132; 75.9%), with only 42 (24.1%) Muslims participating in the study. The most popular family size is 4 children to a husband and wife, as the larger number of respondents (83; 47.7%) reported having 4 siblings. Results on the level of educational attainment of parents shows that only 48 (27.6%) of the fathers of respondents have had a university education, with most (67; 38.5%) haven acquired secondary school education. For the mothers of the respondents, only 37 (21.3%) of the mothers has acquired university education, with most (52; 29.9%) haven acquired primary school education (**Table 1**).

Questions were asked to obtain the opinions of the students on how domestic violence affects their schooling and learning activities. Responses to the questions as obtained and analyzed are presented in frequency table below (**Table 2**).

Table 2: Students' awareness of domestic violence (Source: Spss Output from Field Survey, February 2016).

Awareness	Frequency (%)	Percentage
Yes	73 (42.0)	42
No	101 (58.0)	58
Total	174	100
Medium of awareness		
News	5	6.9
School	9	12.3
Church	9	12.3
Neighbour	13	17.8
Online	6	8.3
Friend	9	12.3
Parents	9	12.3
Public discussion	13	17.8
Total	73	100
Note: Percentages are given in brackets.		

The preliminary analysis shows that most secondary school students are not aware of or do not know what domestic violence is. Specifically, 101 (58.0%) students do not know what domestic violence is, while only 73 (42.0%) know what domestic violence is. The most common mediums through which secondary students know about domestic violence are through neighbors and public discussion as shown in the table. Also, schools, churches, friends and parents are also popular mediums through which students know of domestic violence.

Table 3: Significance test.

Chi square value	P-value	Significance level	Remark
4.506	0.034	0.05	Significant

From the **Table 3**, the Chi square value is 4.506 with an associate p-value of 0.034. As seen, the p-value of 0.034 is lesser than 0.05. This implies that there significantly low level of awareness and knowledge of domestic violence among secondary school children.

Table 4: Frequency table responses to questions (Source: Spss Output from Field Survey, February 2016).

Sr . No.	Questions	Positive responses (Yes)	Negative responses(No)	Total
1	Physical violence between my parents makes the house less conducive for learning.	112 (64.4)	62(35.6)	174
2	Physical violence between my parents makes them less available or involved in my schooling.	99 (56.9)	75 (43.1)	174
3	Physical violence and quarrel between my parents can result in delays in paying my school fees.	96 (55.2)	78 (44.8)	174
4	Physical violence and quarrel between my parents affects my concentration in school.	109 (62.6)	65 (37.4)	174
5	Physical violence and quarrel between my parents makes me less interested in school work.	105 (60.3)	69 (39.7)	174
	Total	521	349	870

Note: Percentages are given in brackets.

Research Question: Does Domestic Violence Have a Significant Impact on the Learning Processes and Outcomes of Secondary School Students?

Table 4 shows considerably more positive responses to questions on the adverse impacts on the schooling processes and outcomes of secondary school students. From the above, 521 (59.9%) of the responses endorsed the view of adverse impacts of domestic violence. In contrast, 349 (40.1%) of responses saw domestic violence as having no impact on their schooling outcomes. Nonetheless, on basis of the more proportionate positive responses domestic violence can be said to have a significant impact on the learning processes and outcomes of secondary school students.

Hypothesis: Domestic Violence has No Significant Impact on the Learning Processes and Outcomes of Secondary School Children

The Chi-square value is obtained from responses to questions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. The expected frequency (E) is obtained by dividing the total number of responses (840) by the number of response categories (2). Hence, the expected frequency is 435(435=870/2). The computation of the Chi-square value is shown in test statistics the table below.

Table 5: Test statistics (Source: Author's Computation, February, 2016).

Category	O	E	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
Positive (Yes)	521	435	86	7396	17.0022
Negative (No)	349	435	-86	7396	17.0022
				χ^2_c	34.0044

The computed Chi square, χ^2_c equals 34.0044 shown in test statistics Table 5. The theoretical Chi square at 0.05 significance level and 1 degree of freedom is 3.481. Since $\chi^2_c > \chi^2_t$ (34.0044 > 3.481), the null hypothesis domestic violence has no significant impact on the learning processes and outcomes of secondary school children is rejected. Thus, it is concluded that domestic violence has a significant adverse impact on the learning processes and outcomes of secondary school children.

Domestic violence is shown to have a significant adverse impact on the learning processes and outcomes of secondary school students. In this regard, domestic violence makes the house less conducive for learning, reduces the availability and involvement of parents in the schooling of the child. The results also show that domestic violence causes delays in paying school fees of the children, affects concentration of students and makes students less interested in school work. The most adverse impact of domestic violence reported in this study is its effect on concentration and reduced interest in school work on the part of secondary school students.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This research work empirically assessed the impact of domestic violence on secondary schools children. The responses from the students were analyzed using relative frequencies (percentages) and the Chi square test. On the basis of review of related literature, the empirical analysis and results, we summarize the findings of our study as follows:

- Majority of secondary school children are either not aware of or do not know what domestic violence is. Nonetheless, secondary school children are exposed to significantly high levels of various forms of domestic violence. The most common form of domestic violence secondary school children are exposed to include overhearing discussions on and shouts from the an event as well as eye witnessing of the event.
- Domestic violence is shown to have a significant adverse impact on the learning processes and outcomes of secondary school students. The most adverse impact of domestic violence reported in this study is its effect on concentration and reduced interest in school work on the part of secondary school students.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the research findings, the following recommendations are made:

- All stakeholders (parents, guardians, teachers and school administrations) should be made aware of the impact of domestic violence on children. Several mediums should be employed in a national awareness programme involving schools and places of worship, to make all stakeholders aware of the far-reaching implications of domestic violence on children.
- Mental and psychological help or services should be provided for children who have been victimized from episodes of domestic violence. At the secondary school level, the office of the guidance and counseling should be made very active, and students should be encouraged to report such cases to the school.
- More child protection services and agencies should be established in the country. These child protection agencies provide systematic help for abused mothers and children. Aggressive intervention programmes should be embarked upon, involving corrective parenting education for couples.
- Domestic violence should be criminalized to curb its excessive occurrence. As such child and mother protection laws should be enacted. This will go a long way to dislodge the cultural entrenchment of the trend.
- Also the treatment of domestic violence cases with levity by the law enforcement agencies and law courts should be discontinued. This will go a long way to reduce the trend, when justice is made available for abused women and children.
- Giving children and adolescents the skills to cope and manage risks and challenges without the use of violence and to seek appropriate support when violence does occur is crucial for reducing violence in schools and communities.
- Funding from central and local governments as well as non-governmental organisations should be re-addressed as financial resources is crucial in order implement the recommendations above. If the funding for these recommendations of support and intervention can be put in place on a national level then there is hope in successfully identifying and stabilizing many children and young people who have been affected by witnessing domestic violence.

CONCLUSION

This study provides insight into the impact of domestic violence secondary school children. Basically this study has shown that domestic violence has a multifaceted impact on secondary school children. As such, it is the basic conclusion of this study that domestic violence has significant adverse impact on the learning outcomes of secondary school students as well as their interpersonal relations, aggressive tendencies and health behaviour.

In view of the above, raising awareness levels nationwide will go a long way to stem the trend. Also, preventive and corrective measures as recommended and appropriately funded will also produce long-term results especially debunking the cultural entrenchment of domestic violence.

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