

IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON JUNIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

Domestic violence is a common phenomenon in African societies because of its tolerance culturally. This study investigated the impact of domestic violence on Junior Secondary students' academic performance in Gwagwalada Area Council of Abuja FCT. A sample of 360 JSS students was involved in the study. They were selected by using both simple and stratified random sampling techniques. Students' academic performance records and a questionnaire "Impact of Domestic Violence on Junior Secondary Students Questionnaire" [IDVJSQ] developed and validated by the researchers with reliability co-efficient of 0.81 were used to gather relevant data. The results of analysed data show that domestic violence exists in the students' homes at a moderate level. The effect on academic performance was found to be negative. Some recommendations were made to reduce domestic violence at the home level and the need to sensitize parents on the dangers of domestic violence.

Introduction

The family is the basic unit of any society that is why throughout all generations the family has always occupied a prime place in the society. The nature of the society is a reflection of the kind of families that make up such society. Parents have the responsibility of training children and showing them good examples so as to live a responsible and fulfilled life. Unfortunately, the family is fast losing that esteemed position because of domestic violence.

Every member of a family has some functions to perform in maintaining the unit. The father has the overall authority in most societies. He directs the affairs of the unit but takes vital decisions after consulting with the wife and children, if these are adults. The father administers and protects the family and contributes to the physical well-being of the members of the family.

The family is an important institution in the society. Family life and processes create conditions for mutual affection among its members and provides socially approved context for child rearing and child care. The family is therefore, in many respect a vital unit in social organisation and social control.

Domestic violence occurs when a family member; partner or ex-partner attempts to physically or psychologically dominate another. It is a pattern of assault and coercive behaviours – including physical, sexual and psychological attacks and economic coercion – that an adult uses against an intimate partner. This pattern of serious assault is most typically exercised by men against their children (Jenkins, 2003). According to Aihie (2009), domestic violence is the intentional and persistent abuse of anyone in the home in a way that causes pain, distress or injury. It refers to any abusive treatment of one family member by another, thus violating the law of basic human rights.

Available information reveals that domestic violence is not a rare phenomenon. It occurs in all cultures; people of all races, ethnicities, religions, sexes and classes. It is perpetrated by both men and women (Adegoke & Oladeji, 2008). Although domestic violence cuts across all social and economic groups, but low-income families are more likely to be affected (Jenkins, 2003). Research also indicates a significant overlap between domestic violence and child abuse in families where one form of violence exists; it is likely that the other does, too. (National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 1999). According to Adegoke and Oladeji (2008), domestic violence may take the

form of spouse abuse, child abuse or abuse of parents (including the abuse of the elderly parents by adult children). Aihie (2009) observed that in parts of the third world generally and in West-Africa in particular, domestic violence is prevalent in some cultures. UNICEF (2001), observed that in Nigeria, as in many other African countries, the beating of wives and children is widely sanctioned as a form of discipline.

Anikweze (1998) in Aihie (2009) identified violence as a threat to adolescents' well-being. The adolescent may become socialized in violent behaviour. He or she may become confused and angry. The anger may become directed toward either parents or other children. They may become aggressive, becoming troublesome at home and at school. They may also become withdrawn, isolating themselves from others and may underachieve, academically.

The Problem- Edelson (1999) stressed that during the last decade, awareness of the potential harm to children exposed to domestic violence has grown. Jaffe, Wolfe and Wilson (1990), observed that domestic violence frequently affects young children, such children face increased risk of emotional depression, poor school performance, low self-esteem, nightmares and physical health complaints. Children living with domestic violence may express behaviour problems, be more likely involved in truancy or have difficulties at school, turn to alcohol or drugs. (Maduagwu, Balami & Archibong, 2010).

According to National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) (2006), children living with domestic violence are 100% emotionally abused 48% psychologically abused, 26% physically abused, 13% accidentally injured and 7% sexually abused.

The effect of such emotional, psychological and physical violence on students' education cannot be undermined. It could reduce the enthusiasm to learn thereby leading to slow pace of thinking and reasoning and ultimately cause poor academic performance. This study is therefore designed to find out the impact of domestic violence on the education especially academic performance of Junior Secondary Students in Gwagwalada Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja FCT.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the conduct of the study:

- (i) What are the types of domestic violence experienced by Junior Secondary students in Gwagwalada Area Council of the FCT?
- (ii) Do students who experience a high level of domestic violence perform above average in school?
- (iii) Is there any significant difference in the performance of male and female students who experience domestic violence?

Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses were postulated for the study as a follow up of the research questions.

- (i) There is no significance relationship between level of domestic violence and students' academic performance.
- (ii) There is no significance difference in the performance of male and female students who experience domestic violence.

Methodology

Research Design: The study was a descriptive research with emphasis on survey approach. This was adopted to enable the researcher gather relevant data on domestic violence as it affects Junior Secondary school students' academic performance in Gwagwalada Area Council.

Population and Sample: The target population consisted of all Junior Secondary school students in Gwagwalada Area Council of the FCT, Abuja. There are eleven (11) government owned, and thirteen (13) private Junior Secondary Schools in the Area Council. [Source: Education Resource Centre, Abuja]. A sample of six (6) Junior Secondary schools was selected for the study. The selection was done through simple random sampling techniques on the basis of three (3) each from

government and private JSS. The sample for the research consisted of 360 subjects made up of male and female students from JS 1 to JS 3. The selection of subjects was done on the basis of 20 subjects per class and 60 subjects per school. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select subjects in each class bearing in mind students' gender and level of academic performance.

Research Instrument: The instruments used for data collection were students' academic performance records and a questionnaire designed by the researchers titled "*Impact of Domestic Violence on Junior Secondary Students Questionnaire*" (IDVJSQ). The questionnaire was designed to measure the level of domestic violence experienced by Junior Secondary school students.

The "IDVJSQ" consisted of two sections. Section A was designed to elicit personal information on the subjects, while Section B contained items meant to gather relevant data on level of violence experienced by the subjects.

The validation of the instrument was done through expert judgement to establish the construct validity. A test-re-test method was used to estimate the reliability co-efficient at three (3) weeks interval and it was found to be 0.81. This was considered reliable hence the suitability for use in this study.

The instrument was administered personally by the researchers to reduce instrument mortality. Out of the 360 copies of questionnaire administered only 328 were found suitable for analysis.

The instrument was scored on the basis of four point scale of 3, 2, 1 and 0. A mean range of 2.5 to 3.0 represented Always, while a range of 1.5 to 2.4 represented Sometimes and a range of 0.5 to 1.4 represented Rarely. Any mean below 0.5 was taken to represent Never. In order to determine the level of domestic violence experienced by the respondents, the number of items on domestic violence was used. Since the items were 25, the minimum score obtainable was 0. A range of 0 to 35 was taken to be low, while 36 to 60 was considered to be moderate and a range of 61 to 75 was accepted as a high level of domestic violence.

Data Analysis: The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviations for research question 1 while frequency count and percentage were used for research question 2. Chi-square statistical analysis was used to test the two null hypotheses postulated for the study.

Results

The results of data analysis on research questions 1 and 2 and hypotheses testing for hypotheses 1 and 2 are presented in tables 1 to 4.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of responses on nature of domestic violence experienced by JS students

S/N	Item	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1.	Physical -			
a.	Slapping	2.2	0.74	Sometimes
b.	Punching	2.1	0.58	Sometimes
c.	Pushing	2.3	0.91	Sometimes
d.	Fighting	1.9	0.72	Sometimes
e.	Biting	1.8	0.81	Sometimes
f.	Shoving	1.9	0.76	Sometimes
g.	Kicking	1.1	0.68	Rarely
h.	Knocking	2.1	0.77	Sometimes
j.	Hair pulling	0.9	0.63	Rarely
k.	Cutting each other with objects	0.8	0.57	Rarely
	Psychological -			
2.	Shouting at each other	2.4	0.72	Sometimes
a.	Criticizing each other	2.6	0.64	Always
b.	Calling one another bad names	2.5	0.91	Always
c.	Harassment	2.3	0.89	Sometimes
d.	Threatening each other	2.4	0.69	Sometimes
e.	Using abusive words	2.5	0.91	Always
f.	No sense of being loved or valued	2.3	0.59	Sometimes
3.	Neglect -			
a.	Failure to provide food for the family	2.1	0.74	Sometimes
b.	Denying family members clothing	2.0	0.69	Sometimes
c.	Neglecting the medical needs of the family	1.6	0.73	Sometimes
d.	Failure to provide children needs	1.9	0.67	Sometimes
4.	Sexual			
a.	Sexual abuse	0.6	0.91	Rarely
b.	Watching film on sexual activity (Pornography)	2.4	0.76	Sometimes
c.	Rape	0.5	0.68	Rarely
g.	Being forced to participate in sexual activity.	0.6	0.71	Rarely

Table 1 shows that out of the 10 items on physical abuse connected to domestic violence only three (3) (items g, j and k) rarely occur. These are kicking, hair pulling and cutting each other with objects while items a, b, c, d, e, f and h occur sometimes in the home. These are slapping, punching, pushing, fighting, biting, shoving and knocking.

The table also shows that domestic violence in the form of psychological abuse occur always and parents display such by criticizing each other, calling one another bad names and using abusive words (items b, c and f), while shouting at each other, threats, harassment and lack of sense of being loved occur sometimes in the home i.e. (a, d, e and g)

On the aspect of neglect as a form of domestic violence, the respondents indicated that all the items (a, b, c, and d) occur sometimes i.e. failure to provide food, clothing, neglect of medical needs and children needs.

The table also reveals that all the items on sexual abuse as a form of domestic violence rarely occur in the home except for pornography which the respondents indicated that it occurred sometimes.

In summary, psychological abuse as a form of domestic violence is the most common domestic violence experienced by Junior Secondary School students in Gwagwalada Area Council, followed by physical abuse and neglect. Sexual abuse rarely occurs in the home of the respondents.

Table 2: Frequency and percentage analysis of domestic violence and students' academic performance

Level of domestic violence	N	Academic performance					
		Above Average		Average		Below Average	
		Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)
High	106	17	16.03	31	29.25	58	54.72
Moderate	151	42	27.81	73	48.34	36	23.84
Low	71	33	46.47	29	40.84	09	12.67

The analysis in table 2 indicate that majority of the students (respondents) (54.72%) who experienced high level of domestic violence perform below average, only few (16.03%) perform above average academically. The table also shows that students who experience moderate level of domestic violence had majority of them (48.34%) performing at average level. However, those respondents who experience low level of domestic violence had majority (46.47%) performing above average. This in essence means that domestic violence affects academic performance negatively.

Table 3: Chi-square test of independence between level of domestic violence and academic performance

Level of domestic violence	N	Academic performance			df	Cal. χ^2 value	Critical χ^2 value
		AV	A	BA			
High	106	17 [29.7]	31 [43.0]	58 [33.3]	4	48.6	12.59
Moderate	151	42 [42.4]	73 [61.2]	36 [47.4]			
Low	71	33 [19.9]	29 [28.8]	09 [22.3]			

*P < 0.05

Table 3 shows that the calculated χ^2 value of 48.6 is greater than the critical χ^2 value of 12.59 at 0.05 level of significance. This by implication means that there is a significant relationship [$\chi^2 = 48.6 > p 0.05$ (df = 4)] between level of domestic violence and academic performance of Junior Secondary School students in Gwagwalada Area Council. The stated null hypothesis was rejected and replaced with an alternate hypothesis.

Table 4: Chi-square statistical analysis of difference in the performance of male and female students with high domestic violence

Gender	N	Academic performance			Df	Cal. χ^2 value	Critical χ^2 value
		AV	A	BA			

Male	59	10	17	32			
		[9.5]	[17.3]	[32.3]	2	0.079	5.99
Female	47	07	14	26			
		[7.5]	[13.7]	[25.7]			

Table 4 indicates that there is no significant difference [$\chi^2 = 0.079$ $p > 0.05$ ($df=2$)] in the academic performance of male and female students who experience high level of domestic violence. The hypothesis was therefore upheld.

Discussion

Findings from the analyzed data on table1 show that the level of domestic violence experienced by junior secondary school students Gwagwalada area council is moderate and the nature of domestic violence experienced by the students are mainly psychological, but they also experienced some level of physical abuse and neglect which are connected to domestic violence. The aspect of sexual abuse in relation to domestic violence is quite rare. The result is contrary to Aihie (2009) observation that domestic violence is prevalent in West Africa. The researchers also wish to observe that there is likelihood that children may not consider physical violence as a problem because of the observation made by UNICEF (2001) that beating is widely sanctified in Nigeria as a form of discipline.

The study also revealed that students who experienced high level of domestic violence performed below average. This by implication means domestic violence affect academic performance negatively. This is clearly seen from the analysis in tables 2 and 3. This is in line with Jaffe et al (1990) report that domestic violence frequently affect young children's school performance leading to poor academic performance and there is likelihood that such children get involve in truancy.

The results of the study did not show any significant difference in the performance of male and female students that experienced high domestic violence. This was an unexpected result to the researchers; it was assumed that male students would be able to absorb the effect of domestic violence better than their female counterparts. The result is contrary to Jaffe et al [1990] report which indicated that children reaction to domestic violence vary according to their age, sex and social support that they received.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study indicated that children at Junior Secondary School level experience domestic violence. Psychological violence is quite common, but physical form of domestic violence and neglect are moderate. However, sexual form of domestic violence is rare. The study has established that domestic violence affect the academic performance of students negatively at this level. The researchers believe that this has serious implications for parents, teachers and school counsellors.

The following recommendations are hereby put forward based on the findings of the study to reduce the level of domestic violence in the area of study:

- (i) Parents should be sensitized by the schools on the dangers of domestic violence and the effects on their children's well-being in general and academic performance in particular. This could be done during Parents Teachers Association meetings and special occasions in the schools. The school counsellors could also organise seminars on domestic violence where some of the parents could serve as resource persons to enlighten others.
- (ii) Family counselling is equally essential at the home front especially on fundamental tips for reducing psychological form of domestic violence. Parents should be properly counselled to avoid open confrontation with their spouses, shouting, calling each other bad names, using abusive words etc especially in the presence of the children.
- (iii) The school counsellors need to identify students who perform poorly in their academics and counsel such students. If the problem is connected to domestic violence, the parents' attention should be drawn to effect a change.

- (iv) Parents should be enlightened on the need to adopt a non violent approach to enforce discipline on their children.

More emphasis should be laid on family counselling at the community level. This could be taken up by religious bodies and the Area Council could establish counselling centres to take care of this.

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