
**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE EDUCATION
OF THE NIGERIAN CHILDREN**

LAWAL, SULEIMAN AND ISHAQ, ISMA'IL JA'AFAR

ABSTRACT

The paper examined domestic violence and its impact on the education of the Nigerian children. Violence was defined in the paper as the exercise of power which can be active (injury), passive (i.e. neglect) or deprivation, intentional or negligent. The concept of domestic violence was discussed in the paper by looking at its typology; which includes physical abuse, emotional abuse and psychological abuse, its symptoms are; agitation, anxiety, regressed behavior, withdrawal and sleeping difficulty and its causes includes; use of drug, alcohol and anger. The impact of domestic violence on the Nigerian children is highlighted under three perspectives: cognitive effects, emotional effects, and behavioral and social effects. The paper was concluded by stating that domestic violence disrupts children's concentration in school task, school adaptation and academic success and finally, it was recommended that teachers should be equipped with skills of identifying children that are emotionally, cognitively, behaviorally and socially affected by domestic violence and find ways of solving their problems.

Introduction

Domestic violence which is one of the violence against women is condemned in all its manifestation. It knows no economic, educational, racial, religions or age barriers. Domestic violence is widespread in Nigerian societies and it rarely has only one victim. It is an age long psycho-social issue in some societies, cultural practices, norms and beliefs fuel the behavior and relegate a women and children to second class status.

Domestic violence is a pattern of threatening or controlling behavior imposed on a woman by someone she loves without regard for her rights, feeling, body or health. (America congress of obstetricians and gynecologist, nd). Domestic violence may or may not constitute a crime, depending on focal statutes, severity and duration of specific acts and other variables. United State Office on Violence against Women (OVW) (nd) defines domestic violence as pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power

and control over another intimate partner.

The United Nation Declaration on the elimination of violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women. Domestic violence can take different forms. Battering, physical assault, sexual assault, psychological abuse and emotional abuse are forms of domestic violence.

Children exposed to domestic violence are likely to experience negative outcome in school adaptation and academic success. Exposure to violence leads to disturbance in cognitive functioning and emotional difficulties such as depression, anxiety, behavior and peer problems. Domestic violence affects children's education by having cognitive, social, emotional and behavioral effects on them. These combines to affect children's academic success, concentration, attention, memory, language skills, children's school adjustment and academic achievement, and finally disrupt children's school adaptation and academic competence. Children exposed to domestic violence not only have more disciplinary problem at school but

perform considerably worse in Math and English.

Violence includes behavior that is diminishing, damaging, or destructive. It takes more forms than physical blows or words. It includes sexual assault, neglect, verbal attacks, insults, threats, harassment and other psychological abuses (Canadian Public Health Authority, 1994). Violence is the expression of physical or verbal force against self or others, compelling action against one's will on pain of being hurt.

Conceptualization of Domestic violence

Violence, also known as domestic abuse, spousal abuse, child abuse or intimate partner violence, can be broadly defined as a pattern of abusive behaviors by one or both partners in the intimate relationships such as marriage, dating, family, friend or cohabitation (Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 2010). Domestic violence can happen to anyone regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, religion or gender, and that it can take many forms, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional, economic and psychological abuse, perpetrators can be either male or female upon another or by both partners upon each other.

Domestic violence includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, verbal attacks, economic abuse and emotional abuse. Domestic violence is widely spread and occurs among all socio-economic groups in Nigeria. There has been increase in the general rate of domestic violence in the larger Nigerian societies. This is evident in the dimension of cases on domestic violence before our courts which have assumed an alarming rate.

The menace of domestic violence has been so devastating to the extent that it has transformed the desired tranquil environment of our homes into an environment filled with horrors, terrors and violence. In Nigeria among Igbo's, Yoruba's, Hausa's, Fulanis, Nupes, Ijaws, and other ethnic communities, cultural practices and gender role assumption ensure total submission of the woman to male dominance and control at home. Children become victims of abuse themselves in households with domestic violence and even those who are not physically abused themselves often suffer psychological and emotional abuse from witnessing domestic violence.

Domestic violence has many forms including physical aggression (hitting, kicking, biting shoving, restraining, slapping ,throwing objects), or threats there of; sexual

abuse, emotional abuse, controlling or domineering, intimidation, stalking, covert abuse (e.g. neglect) and economic deprivation (Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 2010). Domestic violence include co-wives attitude towards children such as denial of food and punishment (Encyclopedia, 2010).

Violence Defined

Violence is the act of doing physical harm to others, it can either be direct (such as killing, inflicting physical injury, or verbal assault) or structure (poverty, hunger, derprivation and exclusion) (Sani, 2007). Across many different human cultures, men are more likely to express violence by means of direct physical violence than woman who express violence through a variety of indirect or non physical means the World Health Organization (2002) defined violence as, the use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either result in or has high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, development or derivation. Violence is an exercise of power which is not approved by world societies, this exercise of power can be active (injury), passive (i.e. neglect or deprivation), intentional or

negligent (Encyclopedia of violence, peace and conflict, 1999).

Typology

Types of violence identified by Rosen. Smith, Few, Dalay, Smith, (2005), in Johnson's typology are;

- Common couple violence (CCV) is not connected to general control behavior, but arisen terrorism as one element in a general pattern of control by one partner over the other.
- Intimate terrorism (IT) may also involve emotional and psychological abuse.
- Violence resistance (VR) sometimes thought as "self-defense", is violence perpetrated by victims against their abusive partners.
- Mutual violent control (MVC) is rare type of intimate partner violence, which occurs when both partners act in a violent manner.

Domestic violence can be actual or threatened, in violent relationships mental abuse and "bullying" go along with physical force. Domestic violence can take any several forms: (A) Battering and physical assault throwing objects at the victims, pushing, biting, kicking, chucking beating, attacking with a weapon. (B)

Sexual assault forced several activities, including vaginal, oral or anal intercourse. (C) Psychological abuse forcing the victim to perform degrading acts, threatening to harm a partner or her children.

Signs and symptoms of Domestic Violence

More than half of the school age children in domestic violence houses show signs of posttraumatic stress disorder (Graham Berman, 1994). Without treatment, these signs lead to delinquency, substance abuse, school drop out and difficulties in their own relations with peers. Symptoms of domestic violence are a sense of helplessness, hopelessness or despise because the victim believed that, this will never escape the control of the abuser. Other symptoms include agitation, anxiety, chronic apprehension, and constant state of alertness that makes it difficult for them to relax or sleep. Domestic violence makes children to become withdrawn, non verbal and exhibit regressed behaviours; sleeping difficulty, concentration problems and generalized anxiety (Volpe, 1996). The physical symptoms include headache, asthma, gastro-intestinal symptoms, chronic pain and restless sleep, inability to sleep, pelvic pain and back pain.

Causes of Domestic Violence

A child imitates the behavior of people in which he finds himself with. Mostly, domestic violence is caused by learning and reinforcement rather than by genetics. Violent behaviors are learned through observation, nearly one half of abusive men grew up in homes where their fathers or step fathers were abusers (<http://www.mchenrycountryturningpoint.org/cause.html>).

Drug and or/alcohol as well as anger may be a precursor to domestic violence. Substance abuse leads to out of control behaviour. Domestic violence is more frequent where individual experience loss of physical health and wage earning power. Children who grow up in an environment where control is maintained through verbal threats and intimidation and conflicts escalates into physical violence are likely to imitate these behaviors. Environment where violent is taught will imprint upon a child's psyche.

Domestic violence is often linked to poor self-esteem; a child growing up in a violent house is likely to have very little self-worth by engaging in negative self-talk. Domestic violence is repeated because there are frequently no legal consequences. Pornographic videos, magazines and websites showed that women are unworthy

of respect and valuable only as sex object for men.

Impacts of domestic violence on children's education in Nigeria.

Domestic violence has many impact on children's education. Children's Experience of violence affects their school adaptation and academic success. Exposure to violence (i.e. children's experience) affects children's view of the world and themselves, and their moral development. Domestic violence exposure creates a highly stressful environment for youngersters (De Bellies, 2001; Pynoos & Eth, 1985). Such environment may lead to posttraumatic stress symptom, including altered psychological, biological, neurological and cognitive functioning. Some of the cognitive process associated with violence exposure includes lower intellectual ability and difficulties with memory and concentration which have obvious ramifications for school performance (De Bellies, 2001). Longitudinal data points to early children behavior problems

as an important link between early family relations and later violence with deviant peer groups and educational underachievement also contribute to these connections (Capaldi, Dishon, Stoolmiller Yoeger, 2001).

The impact of domestic violence on children's education are enormous

s and devastating, some impacts on children include school truancy, violence at school, drug and alcohol use, runaways, academic problems, aggression, avoidance of reminders, behaviour problems, depression, distractibility. Furthermore, other impacts are; emotional numbing, emotional change, low level of empathy, low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, phobias, poor problem solving skills, revenge seeking, social problems, insomnia and feeling of guilt. Domestic violence has many effects on children's education, exposure to violence affect children cognitively, emotionally, behaviorally and socially, and these finally disrupt their academic competence and performance.

Cognitive effects;

Domestic violence is linked with lower IQ scores, poor language skills, decrements in visual motor integration skills and problems with attention and memory (Medina, Mangolin, Gordis, Osofsky and Miller, nd). The academic achievement and school adaptation of children is affected by domestic violence, because as domestic violence depicts inattention regulation., language skills and memory, these will interfere with children's ability to recall, encode and organize information. Domestic violence make children to find themselves struggling with school rules, peer relationship and

classroom instruction. Children may use violence to solve problems at schools, suffer from depression and excessive absence from school.

Cumming and Davies (1994) stated that, children exposed to domestic violence may show difficulties with school work and would have poor academic performance, school phobia and difficulties in concentration and attention. Children exposed to domestic and community violence always show slower school achievement, score lower than the non-abused children on tests of verbal ability; comprehension, reading and math skills and consequently, this may disrupt children's successful functioning in the school which finally affect their academic performance.

Emotional effects:

Children exposed to domestic violence normally result to having depression and more negative self-concept, and these attitudes can undermine children' school adjustment and academic achievement by contributing to negative self-concept and problems with depression and anxiety. These symptoms diminish concentration, sudden startling and intrusive thoughts, as well as making it difficult for children to attend lessons, by lowering their motivation and disrupting

concentration necessary for academic task.

Comming and Davies (1994) in their research, found that, domestic violence result to high levels of aggression, greater likelihood of seeing the intention of others as hostile and psychosomic discarders. Children observed through domestic violence may cry excessively, be withdrawn or shy, and are likely to be runaways in schools.

Children exposed to domestic violence exhibit symptoms which include; anger, misery, terror, fear of dying, fear of the loss of a parent, feeling of guilt, and rage (Newton, 2001). These children could also be extremely introverted or extroverted, showing low level of empathy, low self-esteem, mumbling of feelings and fear of natural exploring. More than half of the school-aged children in domestic violence shelters show clinical levels of anxiety of posttraumatic stress disorder (Graham-Berman, 1994). These children are always at risk of becoming delinquent in schools, school drop out, substance abusers and those who have difficulties in their own relationships with others.

Posttraumatic stress disorder is another consequence of domestic violence on children's emotions. Both chronic and acute exposure to domestic violence leads to diminished concentration, sleep

disturbance, sudden startling and intrusive thoughts (Medina, Mangolin, Gordis, Osofsky, Osofsky & Miller, nd). These symptoms interfere with children's academic achievement, by lowering their motivation, social awareness, social engagement and their ability to solve problems.

Behavioural and social effects:

Domestic violence affect children's social relationship and social adjustment in their schools as well as make them less interpersonally sensitive and attentive to social cues and are likely to ascribe hostile intentions to the neutral behaviours of others. Exposures to domestic violence make children to have difficulties regulating anger and become frustrated which lead to significant behavioural and social problems.

Exposure to domestic violence by children is linked with increased aggression, fighting and disruptive behaviour which consequently disrupt children's school adaptation and academic achievement. In homes where domestic violence occurs, children are at risk of becoming drug or alcohol abusers, being involved in abusive relationships or live in constant fear, instability and confusion.

Volpe (1996) maintained that children exposed to domestic violence may show loss of interest

in social activities, low self-concept, withdrawal or avoidance of peer relations, rebelliousness, and oppositional defiant behaviour in the school setting. Exposure to violence is related to negative feelings, deficits in understanding and experiencing empathy for others which normally lead to poor academic performance, also it leads the children become less popular and rejected by peers.

Children exposed to interfamily violence are reported to have more disciplinary problems at school than their non-exposed peers, and more likely to be suspended. (Medina, Mangohin, Gordis, Osofsky, Osofsky, & Miller, nd). Children who have witness domestic violence or have themselves been abused exhibit health and behavior problems and may have difficulty at school, as well as find it hard to develop close and positive relationship (Domestic violence, 2000).

Conclusion

Exposure of children to domestic violence could have a negative effect on their behaviour and academic achievement. Other effects include; aggressive behaviours, in sensitivity to the pain and suffering of others and increased fearfulness of the world around which consequently disrupt their academic competence and

school adaptation. Domestic violence brings about cognitive, emotional, behavioural and social effects on children' education in Nigeria which disrupt their concentration, school adaptation, peer relationship and the following of classroom instructions.

Recommendations

The writers recommended that:

- ✓ Teachers should be equipped with the skills of identifying students or children that are emotionally, cognitively and socially affected by domestic violence, and find ways of correcting the situation.
- ✓ Government should enact laws and empowered courts to deal with cases of domestic violence and punish the culprits.
- ✓ Workshops, seminars, and sensitization campaigns should be mounted to educate parents, children and community members on their rights and obligations as per as marriage, cohabitation, dating, and relationships are concerned.
- ✓ Children should be motivated, advised and their behaviours should be modified on how to manage and overcome all problems associated with domestic

violence so as to achieve success in their academic pursuit.

References:

American Congress of obstetrician and Gynecologists (nd), Education pamphlet APO83 domestic violence. http://www.Acog.org/publication/patient_education/bp083cfm. Retrieved on 27th Sep, 2010.

Canadian Public Health Association (1994). *Violent in society. A Public health perspective, issue paper*. Ottawa. Retrieved on 27th Sep, 2010, from <http://www.cpha.ca/en/programme/policy/violence>

Capaldi, D.M., Dishion, T.J., Stoolmiller, M., & Yoeger, K. (2001). Aggression toward female partners by at risk young men: The contribution of male adolescent friendships. *Developmental psychology*, 37: 61-73.

Cumming, E.M and Davies, P, R. (1994). *Children and mental conflict: The impact of family dispute and resolution*. New York: Guilford press.

De Bellies, M.D. (2001). developmental traumaology. The development of maltreated children and its implications for research, treatment and policy. *Development & psychopathology*, 13: 539-564.

Encyclopedia of violence, peace and conflicts (2nd ed) (1999). Sandiego: Academic press.

Gralim- Bennann, S. (1994). *Preventing domestic violence, University of Michigan research-web@umich.Edu*. <http://education.Statearts.org/arts/art8>. Retrieved on 29th Sept, 2010.

Medina, A.M., Mangolin, G., Gordis, E.B., Osofsky, J.H., Osofsky, D.J. & Miller, D. (nd). *Domestic violence-general effects*. [Http://education.Stateuniversity.Com/pages/2531/violence-children](http://education.Stateuniversity.Com/pages/2531/violence-children). Retrieved on 27th Sep 2010.

Newton, C.J. (2001). *Effects of domestic violence on children and Teenagers*. Retrieved on 29th Sep, 2011, from <http://www.findcounseling.com/journal/domestic-violence>.

- Pynoos, R.S., & Eth, S. (1985). Children traumatized by witnessing acts of personal violence; Homicide, rape or suicide behaviour. In. S. & pynoos, R.S (Eds). *Post-traumatic stress Disorder in Children*. Washington, D. C: American Psychological Association.
- Rosen, K.H., Sath, S.M., Few, A., Dalay. K.I. & Smith, P, R. (2005). A qualitative investigation of Johnson's typology. *Violence and victims*, 20(3), 319-334. Doi: 10.189/vivi, 20.3 139, PMD 16180370.
- Sani, S. (2007). *The killing fields*. Ibadan; spectrum books limited.
- United States Violence against Woman.” *domestic violence*”. (nd). Retrieved on 13th June 2007, from <http://www.orw.usdoj.gov>. dom
- Volpe, J.S. (1996). *Effects of domestic violence on children and adolescent*, [Mhtml:file:// effect of 20 of % 20 domestic % 20 to children% 20 and 20](http://www.effectof20of20domestic20tochildren20and20) , retrieved on 21st sep, 2010,
- World Health Organization (2002). *World report on violence and health: Summary*. Geneva, Switzerland.
- Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2010). *Domestic violence*. Retrieved on 29th Sep 2010. From <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/domestic-violence>.