

Relationship among Teachers' Physical Abuse, Emotional and Academic Adjustments of Secondary School Students in Giwa Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigates relationship among teachers' physical abuse, emotional and academic adjustments of secondary school students in Giwa Local Government Area (LGA) of Kaduna State, Nigeria. Correlational designed was used for the study. Sample size of one hundred and thirty (130) abused students was drawn from two public schools in Giwa LGA of Kaduna State, Nigeria. Hypotheses formulated for the study were tested with Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). Results showed that all the hypotheses were rejected. The results of the study indicated that teachers' physical abuse has significant negative relationship with emotional adjustment and academic adjustment of students in secondary school. It was therefore recommended, among others, that educational psychologists and school counselors should continuously sensitize teachers on the need to desist from physical abuse because of the negative effect it has on the emotional and academic adjustment of students.

Keywords: teachers, abuse, emotional, academic, adjustment

Introduction

Education is an important pillar of societal development, shaping individuals and communities while driving progress and development. The process of education involves many ways aimed at facilitating learning and growth. Education is a process whereby every member of a society puts his or her efforts into the all-round development of the child (Ifeyinwa & Okwun, 2016). It is generally seen as an agent of socialization and integration of a child or an adult into the norms of the society. In the traditional African society, the belief was that children should merely be seen and not heard. Children were not allowed to listen to adults' discussions or conversations let alone make contributions. This situation was prevalent not only in the society but found its way into the educational system. Consequently, teachers only allowed children to make contributions in the class when they deemed necessary.

However, there has been serious concern in recent times about children's significant role in the family and the society; this is because it is generally believed that children are the future generation, the leaders of tomorrow and the potential flag bearers of any nation. To carry out these duties, children therefore have certain rights that must be protected and not be trampled upon or denied. In Nigeria, for instance, education is viewed as a means of building a free democratic, just and egalitarian society; a united strong and self-reliant nation; a land of bright and full of opportunities for all citizens (Federal Republic of Nigeria cited in Atiku et al., 2020). Thus, Nigeria and his people need a change and growth in education so as to be in line with the developed nations.

Unfortunately, if children are not well taken care of and their rights are being denied, the idea of child abuse and indeed physical abuse arises. Physical abuse has become a global problem that needs to be tackled if children are to be given the right to education. It is displayed everywhere in the society; it starts from the home and then to the school; teachers most at times perpetrate physical abuse on the students. It is a hostile form of aggression whose aim is to cause bodily damage; it includes kicking, molesting, biting, pushing, torturing, fighting, bullying, vandalism, destruction and gangsterism, shoving, hair pulling, stabbing and shooting (Jonathan, 2013).

Physical abuse refers to any contact with the body of the child, which may result in an injury. Such contact may involve beating, hitting, kicking, shaking, punching or any act or omission that is not an accident but that brings some injuries to the child's body. A child is physically abused if he or she is beaten up too often, over-used in the home, on the farm or in the factory (Ifeyinwa & Okwun, 2016). Physical abuse is also seen as any physical injury inflicted, other than by accidental means; any injury at variance with the history given of them or a child's condition which is the result of maltreatment such as malnutrition, deprivation of basic needs or cruel punishment. Examples of injuries which may result from physical abuse include: head injuries, bruises, cuts, and internal injuries and death (Department of Children and Families, cited in Ifeyinwa & Okwun, 2016).

It has become an international menace that the World Health Organization defines it as the intentional use of physical force against an individual that results or has a likelihood of resulting in harm for the individual's health, survival, development or dignity (Butchart, 2015). In their observation, Shekarey et al. (2013) state that physical abuse is a behaviour that has become a common issue in secondary schools; while in the society in general, physical abuse behaviour may be seen as the inflicting of a non-accidental bodily injury on a child. The injury may not have been intended by the teacher, parent or caretaker and is not an accident, but may be due to corporal punishment that may not be appropriate or is unjustifiable for the child at the age that it is being perpetrated. Again, physical abuse is any negative act that can hinder a child's

self esteem, confidence and health development. It has even emerged as one of the serious social problems that need the attention of the public all over the world like the United State of America, Asia and Africa.

In secondary schools, students are required to adjust to the new environment and to work out their concerns directly with the teachers. As far as emotional and academic adjustments are concerned, children are expected to be independent on their activities in the college where they need to adjust with the new academic demands. It is different from what they experienced in their elementary school because here they have to face more competition, deal with more academic load and to maintain pace with other members in the class; they need to follow the different teaching styles of the teachers. But with physical abuse, students' emotional and academic adjustments may inevitably be affected. For instance, Nor and Talaat (2012) suggested that physical abuse experiences may confer risk for internalizing disorders because physical abuse influences maladjustment that could as well emerge as emotional and academic adjustment problems. Therefore, adequate emotional and academic adjustment devoid of abuse, and the willingness to learn to meet the requirements of the environment are fundamental to success in life.

The existence of physical abuse in schools is not in doubt, and teachers' involvement in the perpetration cannot be contradicted. Teachers' involvement in biting, flogging, frogs jump, choking punishment and other forms of corporal punishment has been a huge global problem with a serious effect on the children's mental health, well-being and development throughout their lives. The potentially physically abusive behaviour of a teacher has not garnered much critical attention. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship among physical abuse of teachers, emotional and academic adjustment of secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria. It is hoped that it would provide information in this direction that will help teachers on the underlying dynamics of physical abuse; this will be the first step in reducing its frequency in schools, then hopefully in homes and communities at large. To this end, this study sought to determine relationships of teachers' physical abuse, emotional adjustment and academic adjustment of students and report appropriately.

The issue of physical abuse has been given serious attention in many parts of the world including Nigeria. It is seen as a global problem that needs to be tacked, if children are to be given the right to education and freedom. Given this serious effort, one would have thought that this menace will not persist. However, going through related literature shows that physical abuse occurs not only at home but has found its way into the school system thus constituting a barrier to the attainment of sound educational development in the country (Mfonobong, 2016).

Several studies have shown that physically abused children have poorer school performance and lower educational achievement than non-abused pupils. Physical abuse also has long-lasting effects on mental health, social isolation, criminal behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse, risky sexual behaviour and even obesity, which persist into adulthood (Ba-Saddik & Hattab, 2012). Physical abuse of children leads to aggressive behaviour, emotional and behavioural problems and educational difficulties in children (Finkelhor et al., 2008). Ben (2015) stated that a child may exhibit aggressive and opposition behaviours and may also develop learning difficulties or hyperactivity and that physical abuse children can dishearten a child's self-worth, damage his ability to trust and to adjust to his academic challenges.

Children whose caregivers are unresponsive, neglectful or use excessive harsh physical punishment are less equipped to accomplish critical developmental task and more likely to develop perceptions of themselves as ineffective and unworthy (Kim & Cicchetti, 2011). It was noted by Van Looveren as cited in Bello and Ahman (2021), that if a lower cut-off scores of 166 is used, then 25 per cent of families would be regarded as having a risk for physical abuse among children's population. However, it is interesting to note that the researchers found no correlation between an elevated risk for physical abuse and any particular child psychiatric diagnosis.

Many children who were physically abused early in life simply accept the blame and think that they are the problems such that they feel crazy, bad and worthless. They discredit their own reactions and feelings so that their perceptions match with what they think or feel. They often conclude that had they been better, smarter, or more obedient, their teachers would have been more loving, supportive, or proud of them (Uchenna, 2014). Unfortunately, depression and low self-esteem are natural consequences of this process. Any form of physical abuse is detrimental to the self-concept development of children. It produces withdrawal syndrome, fearfulness, anxiety, low self-esteem and low self-worth. In many societies, according to Runyan (2010), physical violence against children as a method of punishment is endorsed by parents, sanctioned by societal institutions (such as schools) and allowed by law.

In most secondary schools where physical abuse is persistent, it is aimed as a corrective measure to deter students from continuing with particular forms of unacceptable behaviour known to the students. It is usually in form of corporal punishment or any other activity that constitutes bodily pain, but most at times, the teachers' involvement in corporal punishment do this in anger and in the process the child is left injured and physically inflicted with bruises and pains. Mfonobong (2016) define corporal punishment as the use of physical force with the intention of causing bodily pain, but not injury and for the purpose of correction or control. However, under corporal punishment, students are being injured by their teachers; a situation that has prompted

many schools in USA to declare corporal punishment illegal. Similarly in Nigeria, corporal punishment has since been abolished in schools but outside the school area, it is being held in high esteem as a way of correcting and instilling discipline in young children.

Victims of physical abuse are at high risk for poor health, related not only to the physical trauma they have endured, but also to high rates of other social risk factors associated with poor health (Leslie, cited in Cindy 2012). Abused children have high rates of growth problems, untreated vision and dental problems, infectious diseases, developmental delay, mental health and behavioural problems, early and risky sexual behaviours, and other chronic illnesses, but child welfare and health care systems historically have not addressed the health needs of dependent children (Simms, cited in Cindy 2012). Physical abuse takes many forms, and patterns and severity of injury vary by age of the child. McClowskey and Lichter (2003), posit long term developmental problems such as low self-esteem, depression, physical aggression and school failure as common with physically abused victims. It was also found that physically abused victims often displayed excessive uneasiness, anxiety, low self-esteem, aggression and other negative emotional problems (Gewirtz & Edleson, 2007).

Brendgen et al. (2007) hypothesized that physical abuse during childhood is likely to lead to the development of negative self-perceptions and subsequent emotional adjustment difficulties, because the negative cognitions are directly supplied to the child by the abuser. It is on this background that Gibb (2002) added that the potential negative impact of child abuse by the teacher on children's self-perceptions may not only promote future academic failure but also emotional adjustment problems. Similarly, Agnew cited in Mfonobong (2016) advised against the use of physical punishment on children as it may lead to physical abuse which in turn may constitute academic adjustment difficulties. Subsequently, it can lead the children to commit delinquent acts such as truancy. In recent times, the use of more positive forms of behaviour modification is advocated such as persuasion, appeal to reason and good judgment plus the reward for desirable forms of behaviour. In addition, there is also the belief that there should be unconditional acceptance and regard for the learner. In addition, there can be recognition that the child is worthy and should not be treated as an animal but a human being with feelings.

It is believed that if these strategies are used, children will be willing to adjust, attend and engage actively in school activities and programmes. However, the onus is on all as professionals, to ensure that there is knowledge and skills to recognize all forms of physical abuse by teachers and to robustly assess concerns of the maltreatment along with attitudes that encourage children and young people to feel safe and adjust emotionally and academically while at school and even at home, and to be able to disclose abuse when they are experiencing it as well as respond to abuse when it does

come to light. Much more needs to be done to support teachers in appropriate and non-abusive ways of teaching. It is in this light that this study set to explore relationship among teachers' physical abuse, emotional and academic adjustment of secondary school students in Giwa Local Government area of Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the relationship between teachers' physical abuse and emotional adjustments of secondary school students in Kaduna State.
2. Examine the relationship between teachers' physical abuse and academic adjustment of secondary school students in Kaduna State.

Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between teachers' physical abuse and emotional adjustment of secondary school students in Kaduna state.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between teachers' physical abuse and academic adjustment of secondary school students in Kaduna state.

Methodology

The study employed correlational research design meant to seek data on the relationship of teachers' physical abuse, emotional adjustment and academic adjustment of secondary school students. The population of the study was 643 SSS2 and JSS2 students. Lawal Giwa Government Secondary School (LGGSS), Giwa which had 193 students while Government Day Secondary School (GDSS), Giwa had 450 students. A total of 130 respondents were selected through purposive sampling technique from both schools for this study. The study is only concerned with the population of the abused students that was identified through the use of checklist and considered for this study. Therefore, the population of this study is made up of the abused students of JSS2 and SSS2 in public secondary schools in Giwa Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

Table 1: Population of students in the study areas

S/NO	LGA's	Schools	JSS2	SS2	Total
1	Giwa LGA	LGGSS Giwa	101	92	193
		GDSS Giwa	249	201	450
		Grand Total			643

Source: Teaching Service Commission (2024), Kaduna State, Nigeria

The table shows the population of JSS2 and SSS2 students in the secondary schools in Giwa LGA. The total population is six hundred and forty three (643); this was given by the Teaching Service Commission (2024), Giwa Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Sample size of abused students

S/No	Schools	JSS2	SS2	Total	Sample of Respondents
1	LGGSS Giwa	101	92	193	29
2	GDSS Giwa	249	201	450	101
Grand Total				643	130

The researchers decided to purposively select 20 percent of the population in each of the two schools. Consequently, sample size of 29 was selected from LGGSS Giwa and 101 selected from GDSS Giwa. This gives 130 as the total sample for the study. The sample was randomly selected from each of the schools.

The instrument used for the study was a structured questionnaire with three sections. Section was on physical abuse, section B was on emotional adjustment while section C was on academic adjustment. The instrument was validated by three experts from the area of psychology and counselling. Their contribution led to the dropping and addition of some items. The three sections contain the following items: physical abuse had thirteen items, emotional adjustment had seventeen items and academic adjustment had seventeen items as well. They are all measured on a five Likert-like scale options of strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree with points 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. To determine the reliability of the instrument, it was given to 40 students of both JSS 2 and SS 2 abused students of public secondary schools in Kaduna State. Cronbach alpha was used in the analyses which yielded the coefficient alpha for the three sections of 0.91 for physical abuse, 0.79 for Emotional adjustment and 0.85 for Academic adjustment. The services of research assistants were employed in collecting the data which was done through direct delivery approach. The data collected from the respondents were coded and analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). All the three research null hypotheses were tested with the Pearson Product Moment Correlation to either be rejected or accepted at 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation of results

H01: There is no significant relationship between teachers' physical abuse and emotional adjustments of secondary school students in Giwa LGA of Kaduna State.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) statistics on the relationship between teachers' physical abuse and emotional adjustment of students in Giwa LGA, Kaduna State

Variables	N	Mean	Std	Df	Correlation index r	p	Remark
Teachers Physical Abuse	124	36.31	9.76	122	-0.786**	0.01	Negative relationship
Students Emotional Adjustment	124	43.94	12.86				

p-value < 0.05, absolute value of correlation index > r critical at df 122

Table 3 shows correlation index r value of -0.786 with p value of 0.01 which is not greater than 0.05 alpha level of significance. This result shows that significant negative relationship exists between teachers' physical abuse and emotional adjustment of secondary school students in Giwa LGA of Kaduna State. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between teachers' physical abuse and emotional adjustment of students in secondary schools in Giwa LGA of Kaduna State is hereby rejected.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between teachers' physical abuse and academic adjustments of secondary school students in Giwa LGA of Kaduna State.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) Statistics on the relationship between teachers' physical abuse and academic adjustment in Giwa LGA of Kaduna State

Variables	N	Mean	Std	Df	Correlation index r	p	Remark
Teachers Physical Abuse	124	36.31	9.76	122	-0.791**	0.01	Negative relationship
Students Academic Adjustment	124	61.94	12.39				

p calculated < 0.05, absolute value of correlation index > r critical at df 122

Table 4 shows correlation index r-value of -0.791 with p value of 0.01 which is not greater than 0.05 alpha level of significance. This result shows that significant negative

relationship exists between teachers' physical abuse and academic adjustment of secondary school students in Giwa LGA of Kaduna State. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between teachers' physical abuse and academic adjustment of students in secondary schools in Giwa LGA of Kaduna State is hereby rejected.

Discussion of the findings

The analysis of hypothesis one shows significant negative relationship between teachers' physical abuse and emotional adjustment of students. The physical maltreatment of children makes them emotionally disturbed and subsequently given room to emotional adjustment problems. This is in line with the opinion of Brendgen et al. (2007) who hypothesized that physical abuse, during childhood, is likely to lead to the development of negative self-perceptions and subsequent emotional adjustment difficulties, because the negative cognitions are directly supplied to the child by the abuser. This result also affirms Gibb's (2002) proposition that the potential negative impact of child abuse by the teacher on children's self-perceptions may not only promote future academic failure but also emotional adjustment problems.

The outcome of hypothesis two showed that significant negative relationship exists between teachers' physical abuse and academic adjustment of secondary school students. From this outcome, academic adjustment of students tends to be overly negatively adjusted when teachers physically abuse them instead of showing them love. This agrees with the thinking of Agnew cited in Mfonobong (2016) when he advised against the use of physical punishment on children as it may lead to physical abuse which in turn may constitute academic adjustment difficulties. This is also in line with Ben (2015) when he stated that a child may exhibit aggressive and opposition behaviours and may also develop learning difficulties or hyperactivity and that physical abuse of children can dishearten a child's self-worth, damage his ability to trust and to adjust to his academic challenges. Long term developmental problems such as low self-esteem, depression; physical aggression and school failure are common with physically abused victims (McClowskey & Lichter, 2003).

Conclusion

The outcome of the study prompts the researchers to conclude that physical abuse generally had negative association with emotional and academic adjustments of students in secondary school. This outcome is an indication that abuse by teachers on students in secondary schools is a problem that affects not only the students but the public at large that witness it. This is because the results obtained have confirmed that significant negative relationship exists between teachers' physical abuse and emotional adjustment, and academic adjustment of students in secondary schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Educational psychologists and school counsellors should continuously sensitize teachers on the need to desist from physical abuse because of the negative effect it has on the emotional and academic adjustments of students.
2. Government and Non-Governmental organization should invigorate their efforts on massive campaign against physical abuse. This will make teachers to understand the implication of physical assault on their students such as kicking, pushing and torturing; as this produces fearfulness, anxiety, low self-esteem and academic adjustment difficulties.

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