

IMPACT OF CHILD ABUSE ON SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING OF IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN YABA LOCAL COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT AREA OF LAGOS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of child abuse on social and emotional well-being of in-school adolescents in Yaba Local Council Development Area of Lagos State. Two objectives were translated to two hypotheses and tested in the study. Descriptive research design was adopted in the study. The population of the study comprised SS II students in Yaba LCDA. Two hundred and thirty (230) Senior Secondary School Two students were selected as sample size for this study using the stratified sampling technique. A researcher-designed questionnaire was used for data collection. The hypotheses were tested using Chi-square (χ^2) at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study showed that there is a significant impact of child abuse on emotional wellbeing and social integration of in-school adolescents. The study concluded that child abuse to a large extent, determines the level and rate of emotional well-being and social integration of in-school adolescents. The study recommends that parents should try their possible best to provide the very basic need especially food, shelter, medical and academic related need, this enhance their emotional wellbeing. Also, the society should ensure that the children in the community are not any way abused or neglect. Things like sexual abuse, physical abuse, psychological abuse, emotional and mental abuse should be avoided by adults in the society.

Keywords: Adolescents, Child Abuse, Social Wellbeing, Emotional Well-being, Social Integration.

Introduction

The recent surge in reported cases of child abuse in Nigeria reflects a disturbing trend indicative of society's neglect and disrespect for its most vulnerable members. Child abuse, encompassing various forms of physical, emotional, and sexual mistreatment, poses significant threats to the well-being of children, particularly adolescent girls. Despite being a pervasive issue, many instances of child abuse go unnoticed and unreported, perpetuated by individuals who should serve as protectors – parents, relatives and caregivers. Child abuse, in the myriad forms, inflicts profound harm on its victims, undermining their social and emotional development. Defined as any action or inaction that harm or impedes a child's healthy growth, child abuse manifests in physical violence, psychological trauma and sexual exploitation. The prevalence of child abuse in Nigeria is staggering with alarming statistics revealing its widespread occurrence across the country. Studies indicate that a significant proportion of Nigeria children, especially girls, endure various forms of abuse before reaching adulthood.

The impact of child abuse extends far beyond its immediate physical consequences, profoundly affecting the social and emotional wellbeing of victims, particularly adolescents. Adolescents, in their formative years, are susceptible to the detrimental effects of abuse, which can impede their psychological growth, esteem, and interpersonal relationships. Research has shown that adolescents who experience abuse are at greater risk of developing mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Smith, Herdeson & Waltkins, 2018). Furthermore, child abuse can disrupt adolescents' sense of trust and security, leading to difficulties in forming healthy relationships and navigating social interactions (O'Connor, Morrison & Korby, 2019).

Social and emotional wellbeing are crucial aspects of adolescents' overall development, influencing their ability to cope with challenges, engage in positive relationships and pursue their goals. Child abuse undermines these facets of well-being, eroding adolescents' confidence, sense of belonging and emotional resilience. Victims of abuse may experience feelings of shame, guilt and worthlessness, further exacerbating their struggles with mental health and social integration (Edeh, 2017). Additionally, the stigma associated with child abuse can isolate adolescents from their peers and communities, perpetuating feelings of loneliness and alienation.

Aside from the immediate physical injuries children can experience through maltreatment, a child's reactions to abuse or neglect can have lifelong and even intergenerational impacts. Childhood maltreatment can be linked to later physical, psychological, and behavioral consequences as well as costs to society as a whole. These consequences may be independent of each other, but they also may be interrelated. For example, abuse or neglect may stunt physical development of the child's brain and lead to psychological problems, such as low self-esteem, which could later lead to high-risk behaviors, such as substance use. The outcomes for each child may vary widely and are affected by a combination of factors, including the child's age and developmental status when the maltreatment occurred; the type, frequency, duration, and severity of the maltreatment; and the relationship between the child and the perpetrator. Additionally, children who experience maltreatment often are affected by other adverse experiences (e.g., parental substance use, domestic violence, poverty), which

can make it difficult to separate the unique effects of maltreatment (Rosen, Handley, Cicchetti, & Rogosch, 2018).

Child abuse and neglect can cause a variety of psychological problems. Maltreatment can cause victims to feel isolation, fear, and distrust, which can translate into lifelong psychological consequences that can manifest as educational difficulties, low self-esteem, depression, and trouble forming and maintaining relationships. Taylor and Steward (2019) have identified links between child abuse and neglect and the following psychological outcomes. The effects of child abuse on adolescents cannot be overemphasized. These effects can be noted in almost all the aspects of the individual; physically, there are incidence of impaired development, failure to thrive, malnutrition, severe illness as well as physical harm in form of cuts, burns and bruises resulting to disabilities and physical handicap (Raby, Roisman, Fraley, & Simpson, 2015). Consequent upon lack of caution, there is also an endangering incidence of a life time low self-esteem. Emotionally, there are evidences of poor self-image, alcohol or drug abuse, unusual behaviour, depression, apathy and/or suicidal attempt.

Kim, Kawachi, Chen and Kubzansky (2017) asserted that in addition to obvious physical injuries, other effects include emotional and mental health problems and that such problems may develop immediately or later in life which may persist into adulthood. On the physical abuse, they commented that bruises, burns, welts or scrapes are common. These marks often have the shape of the object used to inflict them such as belt, lamp cord among others.

Emotional stability is an essential ingredient for the individual's growth and wholesome development. An emotionally stable individual is far ahead of his counterparts who are emotionally unstable in many respects. Although that is the case, many school going individuals especially at the secondary school levels are highly emotionally unstable, and this is always a matter of concern to teachers and school administrators. Children who go to school need a level of emotional stability for functionality. An emotionally disturbed child is a disadvantaged child in the school setting. It is therefore important that the growth process of the child is such that he/she grows up as an emotionally stable individual. Isangedighi (2016) believes that the quality and amount of learning an individual is capable of having, is largely influenced by his psychological well-being. So one's predisposition towards success or failure is moderated by his emotional status. Thus, an emotionally disturbed child cannot make much gain in learning as a child who is emotionally stable (Stone & Rowley, 2018). Emotional stability is a sign of well-adjusted personality, while unstable emotion signifies maladjustment. Against this backdrop, this study aims to investigate the impact of child abuse on the social and emotional wellbeing of in-school adolescents in the Yaba Local Council Development Area of Lagos State. By examining the experience of adolescents subjected to various forms of abuse, this research seeks to shed light on the profound effects of abuse on their mental health, interpersonal dynamics and overall quality of life.

Statement of the Problem

Child abuse is a wide spread social problem that continues to affect millions of young people globally, leaving deep and long lasting consequences on their psychological health and social adjustment. In many societies, adolescents who have experienced abuse often struggle with low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, withdrawal, aggression and difficulty building healthy

interpersonal relationships. Socially, they may feel isolated, stigmatized or mistrustful of others, which hamper their ability to form friendships and integrate into peer groups. Emotionally, the trauma of abuse may manifest in persistent feelings of fear, shame and worthlessness, which can undermine their sense of identity and overall well-being.

Despite increasing awareness, reports and interventions aimed at curbing child abuse, adolescents continue to suffer from its consequence. Edeh (2017) reported that the scars of abuse extend beyond childhood and often influence social functioning, school performance and mental health well into adulthood. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the impact of child abuse on the social and emotional wellbeing of adolescents, with the aim of providing insights that can guide caregivers, educators, counsellors and policy maker in designing effective interventions.

Purpose of the Study

This study examines the impact of child abuse on social and emotional well-being of in-school adolescents in Yaba Local Council Development Area of Lagos State. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Determine the impact of child abuse on emotional wellbeing of in-school adolescents in Yaba Local Council Development Area of Lagos State.
2. Determine the impact of child abuse on the social integration among in-school adolescents in Yaba Local Council Development Area of Lagos State.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the study:

1. There is no significant impact of child abuse on emotional wellbeing of in-school adolescents in Yaba Local Council Development Area of Lagos State.
2. There is no significant impact of child abuse on the social integration among in-school adolescents in Yaba Local Council Development Area of Lagos State.

Research Methodology

The study employed survey research design. The survey research design was concerned with the collection of data for the purpose of describing and interpreting existing conditions. This design enables the use of questionnaire in other to collect relevant and adequate data for the study. The design enables the researcher to test the hypotheses of the study. The population of the study comprised Senior Secondary School Two (SS 2) students.

Two hundred and thirty (230) students were selected as sample size for this study using the stratified sampling technique. Furthermore, forty six (46) students made up of 23 males and 23 females were selected from each of the five schools selected for this study in order to represent the entire population giving a total of 230 students comprising 115 males and 115 females.

The research instrument that used in this study was a research designed questionnaire titled "Impact of Child Abuse on the Social and Emotional Wellbeing of In-school Adolescents Questionnaire (ICASEWIAQ)". The questionnaire was structured into two sections. Section A was on respondents' bio-data while section B covered the variables captured in the hypotheses using the modified Likert 4-point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly

Disagree). The instrument has a reliability coefficient of 0.81 when tested during the pilot study.

The research instrument was administered by the researcher to the respondents in their various locations. The respondents were given insights on what the questionnaire was about and the need for them to respond to the items. The respondents were given the questionnaires to fill. The questionnaires were collected immediately from the respondents upon completion. Chi-square (χ^2) statistical tool was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant impact of child abuse on emotional wellbeing of in-school adolescents in Yaba Local Council Development Area of Lagos State.

Table 1: Chi-square (χ^2) analysis of impact of child abuse on emotional wellbeing of in-school adolescents

Variables	—	X	LS	χ^2_{cal}	χ^2_{tab}	Remark	Decision
Child Abuse	2	2	0	4	4	Significant	H ₀₁ Rejected
Emotional Well-Being	.	.	.	9	0		
	1	0	0	.	.		
	1	5	5	1	1		
	1	3	1	5	1		
	8	5					

Evidence from Table 1 revealed that χ^2 calculated (49.15) was greater than χ^2 tabulated (40.11) given 27 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected. This shows that there is a significant impact of child abuse on emotional wellbeing of in-school adolescents in Yaba Local Council Development Area of Lagos State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant impact of child abuse on the social integration among in-school adolescents in Yaba Local Council Development Area of Lagos State.

Table 2: Chi-square (χ^2) analysis of impact of child abuse on the social integration among in-school adolescents

Variables	N	X	LS	χ^2_{cal}	χ^2_{tab}	Remark	Decision
Child Abuse		22.11					
	230		0.05	45.23	40.1	Significant	H ₀₂ Rejected
Social Integration		14.83			1		

Evidence from Table 2 revealed that χ^2 calculated (45.23) was greater than χ^2 tabulated (40.11) given 27 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected. This shows that there is a significant impact of child abuse on the social integration among in-school adolescents in Yaba Local Council Development Area of Lagos State.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the findings in **hypothesis one** revealed that there is a significant impact of child abuse on emotional wellbeing of in-school adolescents. The reason for this finding could be understood from the fact that child abuse can lead to feelings of betrayal, causing difficulty trust others. Also, abuse can make a child feel helpless, leading to feelings of powerlessness and low self-esteem. This finding is in line with position of Alexandrov, Cowan and Cowan (2018) that the experience of physical abuse in childhood creates a dysfunctional view of the self and impedes children's ability to accept love in healthy ways because they have been trained to believe that they are not worthy of it. As children begin to make sense of the abuse, they may begin to develop the notion that people are not safe, predictable, or trustworthy, thereby making attachment a dangerous risk that they are no longer willing to take. Also, Okpara (2019) asserted that children always have that feeling and believe that parents can do anything and can supply all their needs. When parents begin to neglect their children especially physical neglect (failure to provide basic necessities like food, clothing, or shelter) consistently, the child will lose such trust for the parents. This distrust can even translate into lifelong psychological consequences that can manifest as trouble forming and maintaining relationships as they can hardly trust anyone in their immediate environment for anything. Alpert (2018) also noted that physical child neglect especially in the aspect of clothing can make the child develop inferiority complex, they tend to feel inferior among peers because they look tattered look. Also, emotional neglect can make a child develop a negative impression and set their mind that they are unworthy of love and attention.

Furthermore, Alpher and France (2017) opined that children who were victims of physical neglect were found to be displaying serious social-emotional problems like suffering from personality disorders with high symptoms of anxiety, depression and dissociative disorders in adolescence and adulthood. In the same way, physical neglect and a lack of supervision in childhood is said to be associated with an increase in the risk of producing self-harming behavior and suicidal tendencies. Finkelman (2014) also asserted that children who usually grow up in such places where they always have to face rebuking and belittled may experience problems like insecurity, worthlessness and anger. One of the most significant problems with emotional abuse or with children who don't get the affection and warmth which they need from their parents may find it extremely hard to develop and maintain healthy relationships with other people in their life. Lower satisfaction with life is often experienced by those adults who had been abused as a child as compared to those who have lived a life without abuse. Manaf and Mokhtar (2018) also asserted that emotional problems are closely related to anxiety, depression and anger caused by the stress they experience. This clearly shows that the effects of abuse are really serious as they will disrupt emotional balance and well-being which later affect the individuals' psychological stability into adulthood.

The result of the findings in **hypothesis two** revealed that there is a significant impact of child abuse on the social integration among in-school adolescents. The reason for this finding could be understood from the fact that abuse can cause a child to withdraw from social interactions,

leading to feelings of loneliness. Also, child abuse can lead to fear of rejection, making it hard to form close relationship. This is line with Hoyano (2017) assertion that individuals who have been abused as children may have impeded social skills and difficulty in developing healthy attachments. These difficulties may increase the probability that a formerly abused individual will select a mate who also has impeded social abilities and attachment issues. Okpara (2019) also found that child(ren) that is physically neglected tend to isolate and disconnected from their peers in order to avoid intimidation because they feel they lack the social and emotional capacity to engage in group activities. The aftermath of isolation is loneliness. Also, Oniyama, Oniyama and Asamaigbo (2014) also asserted that the physical neglect of a child can make the child turn out to become problematic and a problem to the society. By way of trying to cope with lack of some basic needs, the child so neglected children get involve in petty stealing which on the long run they turn out to be big time robbers in the society. Also, an emotionally neglected child trying to cope with depression and other pain may resort to using drugs and other substance leading to drug abuse. Neglected children due inferiority complex developed as a result of low self-esteem might be more vulnerable to peers' bullying (Aderinto & Okunola, 2014).

Furthermore, Fairstth (2019) opined that children who have been physically abused may still feel the effects long after their injuries have healed. Being shaken, hit or physically abused in any way as a child can lead to poor physical or mental health later in life, including depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, childhood behavioural or conduct disorders, drug use, suicide attempts, obesity, sexually transmitted infections and risky sexual behaviour. Children affected by neglect tend to be more isolated at school compared to other groups of children and have difficulty making friends (Bussien, 2019). Neglected children may also display aggressive and disruptive behaviour; however, externalizing behaviour problems are more closely associated with physical and sexual abuse or witnessing domestic violence (Bussien, 2019). Children who are maltreated are also prone to difficulty in forming new relationships with peers and adults, and in adapting to norms of social behaviour (Alpher & France, 2017).

Conclusion

The paper concluded from the findings of this study that there is a significant impact of child abuse on emotional wellbeing of in-school adolescents and there is a significant impact of child abuse on the social integration among in-school adolescents.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. Parents should try their possible best to provide the very basic need especially food, shelter, medical and academic related need. This will make the child see his/her self as a valuable asset in the family and society instead of having low self-esteem which result in depress feeling and other unruly behaviours.
2. The society should ensure that the children in the community are not any way abused or neglect. Things like sexual abuse, physical abuse, psychological abuse, emotional and mental abuse should be avoided by adults in the society.

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