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SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIA

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A B S T R A C T

The paper explained the concept of school violence in secondary school and the causes of school violence which include; desperation and despair, mob spirit, hatred and jealousy, alcohol and drug abuse, lax criminal-justice systems, false religion, low self-worth, witnessing violence in the home and many others. It also talked about the types of violence such as the violence of teachers to students, intimidation, exclusion, sexual violence, and so on. The paper also highlighted the effects of school violence on students' academic performance which leads to internalizing abuse-related distress as a harsh consequence of poor academic performance. It also highlighted some measures to adopt to minimize school violence which include an adaptation of physical security measures, and implement of policies designed to prevent violence. Conclusively, there is an increased need to address the effects of violence on academic progress and the pro-social classroom behavior of students.

K E Y W O R D S

School Violence, Implications and Academic Performance

INTRODUCTION

Violence among students of secondary school occurs worldwide. Among all the problems of secondary schools, none is as debilitating as violence because of its effect both on the perpetrator of the violence and the victim. Violence is a pattern of behaviour in which one individual is chosen as the target of aggression by one or others; the targeted person (the victim) generally has less power than those who engage in aggression (Baron and Bryne, 2015). In the opinion of Paszkiewicz (2010), violence in the school is the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy a student. The World Health Organization's defined violence in the school as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation in the school environment (World Health Organisation, 2002). According to Jungmeen, Talbot and Cicchetti (2014), the major forms of violence prevalent in secondary schools today include; physical violence, sexual violence, emotional violence and others.

Physical violence in the school occurs when students use part of their body or an object to control another's actions. Physical violence and abuse happen in the school when a teacher or student uses physical force against another. It can include direct assaults on the body using objects or weapons; assault on children, being denied access to the hostel, deprivation of sleep or food, and kidnapping. Physical violence and abuse can start slowly and inconspicuously, for example with throwing an object or a slap, and get more intense or worse over time. A student can experience many different types of abuse that are physical. These include: shaking, slapping, pushing, punching or scratching, kicking, spitting or beating and even kidnapping (Jungmeen et' al. 2014). Today, exposure to school violence as well as injury due to violence have contributed to both increased disruptive or unfocused classroom behaviour for children, adolescents, and teenagers and reduced academic progress (Carlson, 2010). Sexual violence in the school is any sexual act or attempt to obtain a sexual act by violence or coercion, acts to traffic a student or acts directed against a student's sexuality, regardless of the relationship to the victim (Fantuzzo and Mohr, 2019). It occurs in times of peace and armed conflict situations, is widespread and is considered to be one of the most traumatic, pervasive, and most common human rights violations. Sexual violence is a serious public health problem and has a profound short or long-term impact on physical and mental health, such as an increased risk of sexual and reproductive health problems, increased risk of suicide, prevalence of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Death occurring either during a sexual assault or as a result of deflated honour in response to a sexual assault is also a factor of sexual violence. Students affected by sexual violence in the school suffer from lowered social and emotional competence, diminished academic performance and fear of more abuse (Burnham, 2019).

Sexual violence in the school remains highly stigmatized in all settings, thus levels of disclosure of the assault vary between regions. In general, it is a widely underreported phenomenon, thus available data tend to underestimate the true scale of the problem. In addition, sexual violence in the school is also a neglected area of research, thus deeper understanding of the issue is imperative in order to promote a coordinated movement against it. The WHO's World Report on Violence and Health lists the following ways in which sexual violence against students (male and female) can be committed: Systematic rape during armed conflict, rape within marriage or dating relationships, rape by strangers, unwanted sexual advances or sexual harassment, including demanding sex in return for favours, sexual abuse of mentally or physically disabled people, sexual abuse of students and forced marriage or cohabitation, including the marriage of children (Aisenberg, Trickett, Mennen, Saltzman, and Zayas, 2017).

In the view of Fusco and Fantuzzo (2011), emotional violence in the school is any kind of non-physical abuse imposed from one student to another. Victims of emotional abuse in the school are subjected to repeated threats, manipulation, intimidation, and isolation that cause them to have anxiety, fear, self-blame, and worthlessness. Emotional abuse is a form of interpersonal violence that encompasses all forms of non-physical violence and distress caused through non-verbal and verbal actions in the school. Emotional abuse is deliberate and manipulative and is a method of control. It often occurs in conjunction with other types of abuse, but it may also occur in isolation. Like other types of violence, emotional abuse most often affects those with the least power and resources. Emotional abusers have a need to dominate and feel in charge of their victims.

Threatening or coercive tactics like intimidation, humiliation, harassment, and embarrassment have often led to intrapersonal, interpersonal, and academic limitations in Nigerian schools (Jungmeen, et' al, 2014).

Table 1: Prevalence of forms of Violence according to Region and State

Characteristics	REGION					
	NORTH (%)			SOUTH (%)		
	Taraba	Sokoto	Total %	Abia	Ondo	Total %
Physical Violence	68.8%	88.8%	78.9%	83.3%	95.8%	90.1%
Psychological Violence	35.4%	41.8%	38.7%	56.3%	65.6%	61.3%
Sexual Violence	9.4%	0.0%	4.7%	3.1%	3.1%	3.2%
Gender-Based Violence	4.2%	2.0%	3.2%	7.3%	6.3%	6.9%
Health-Related Violence	0%	0%	0%%	3.1%	0%	1.6%

Source: *Federal ministry of education in collaboration with UNICEF, 2015*

According to UNICEF (2007), a comparison of the prevalence of violence in the North and the South revealed that all forms of violence were more in the south than in the north except for sexual violence. Physical violence was higher in the south (90%) compared to the north (79%). Psychological violence was also more prevalent in the south (61%) than in the north (38.7%). In the north, health-related violence was not reported, but in the south about 2% of learners reported it. Sexual violence was however more prevalent in the north (4.7%) than in the south (3.2%).

Causes of school violence in Nigerian schools

The underlying causes of school violence according to Close (2012) include; desperation and despair, mob spirit, hatred and jealousy, alcohol and drug abuse, lax criminal-justice systems, false religion, low self-worth, witnessing violence in the home and many others. The consequences of school violence on students include reduced academic progress, increased disruptive or unfocused classroom behaviour, intrapersonal, interpersonal academic limitations, lowered social and emotional competence, and diminished academic performance (Bostock, Plumpton and Pratt, 2017).

Another cause of school violence may be personality problems. Shyness, for instance, may cause a student to feel out of place amongst his peers, thereby influencing him to be rebellious or try to get noticed by any means. Such behaviour may also result in bullying and gang fights.

Furthermore, school violence may arise due to the psychological deficiencies created by dysfunctional homes. Worry, hatred, inferiority complex, anger and other negative emotions which fuel violent behaviour, could develop in people when they are exposed to poor parenting or disaccord amongst family members. Also, in homes where parents/guardians display violent behaviour, children/wards usually adopt violence as a way of asserting authority.

Another cause of school violence is violent media. The impact of violent television programs and video games is largely underestimated in society. Children/ teenagers often emulate their favourite television characters in action movies and this leads to learned violent behaviour in schools. Also, the government in some parts of the world - especially First-World countries - permits weapons such as guns to be made more accessible in households. Teenagers are able to gain access to sharp objects and dangerous arms, which they take to school and use to intimidate their peers (Crawage, 2013).

In addition to this, the legal system in many areas - especially third-world countries - is yet to develop specific laws that will help curb school violence and make it an offence punishable by the law. Having identified some major causes of school violence, it is imperative to proffer solutions to this social ill.

Types of school violence

According to Obilor and Ikpa (2021), violence can be manifested in different ways; can be verbal, physical or psychological. What varies is the "who executes it"(aggressor) and "who receives it"(victim).

Violence of the teacher to the student: It refers to those violent acts carried out by the teachers towards the students using the authority that confers their position. This type of violence was very common throughout most of the 20th century, when physical punishment was used when a student misbehaved or did not do what was established by the teacher. For example, when teachers beat a rule to students who disobeyed the rules or called them "donkeys,""brutes,""good for nothing."

Also when the left hand was tied to the lefties in order to write with the right hand since they considered that was the correct form of writing. Consequently, the necessary measures were taken to eradicate this type of violence, for which laws were created to ensure the physical and psychological integrity of the students. However, this type of violence continues to be present only to a lesser extent (Obilor and Ikpa 2021).

Violence of the student to the teacher: This type of violence constitutes acts of physical, psychological and verbal violence, for example: making fun of teachers' clothes, insulting and cursing them during and outside the class, death threats, among others. In many cases teachers do not realize that they are victims of school violence, since they consider that insults and ridicule (acts of violence more common) pose no risk, obviating the psychological damage they generate.

Exclusion: This type of violence occurs when a group of students decide to"putaside"a student. They act as if this person did not exist, causing them to be isolated. Exclusion is a type of psychological violence and can become one of the most common causes of suicide.

Intimidation: Bullying is the act of infusing fear with threats and using it to make victims do what the victimizer wants (Obilor and Ikpa 2021).

Sexual Violence: This type of violence happens when there is the presence of inappropriate sexual behaviors within the educational community. Sexual violence is all sexual innuendo, showing the genitals and physical contact without consent (friction of the skin with the hand or some other part of the body and even force the sexual act).This type of violence can be done by a teacher to a student or vice versa, by a student to another student, by a teacher to another teacher, among others.

Coercion: This type of violence refers to violence against someone in order to force them to do something that they do not want. Coercion, like intimidation, uses threats to achieve what you want. However, it also uses physical violence.

Bullying or harassment: Bullying is an act of repeated violence. It refers to all kinds of abuse (mockery, physical abuse, among others) made to a student, teacher or other member of the educational community. Through bullying, the perpetrator can exercise physical and psychological control over his victim to the point of manipulating it at wills, bullying is one of the most common forms of school violence and one of the causes of teen suicide (Eiendu, 2014).

Vandalism: School vandalism refers to those acts of destruction against the facilities and assets of educational institutions. Therefore, it is considered an act of disrespect. In that sense, it can be said that graffiti made without permission of the highest authority of the Educational Unit represent an act of vandalism. Vandalism results in the suspension of classes (when it damages the structure of institutions or when the furniture is stolen).

Violence among teachers: This type of violence is not very common in the educational community. It refers to all the mockery and abuse done by one teacher to another. Violence among teachers also includes harassment, sexual violence, coercion, intimidation, among others.

Violence of parents and teachers' representatives: It consists of all those threats and physical damages done by parents and teachers representatives. Other acts of violence carried out at school according to Dabu (2011) include:

i. Use or sell of drugs within the facilities of the Educational Institution.

ii. Carrying white and firearms inside the facilities of the Educational Institution.

iii. Put bombs and carry out shootings inside the facilities of the Educational Institution.

iv. Kidnap members of the educational community.

v. Carry out robberies and thefts within the educational institution or in the surrounding areas.

vi. Use or sell alcoholic beverages at the institution.

vii. Inciting the consumption of narcotics.

viii. Theft of answers from exams to be done in class.

Effect of School violence on Students' Academic Performance

In relation to academic functioning, students who experience higher levels of violence in the school have lower abilities in Reading, Mathematics, English, Physics, Chemistry, General Knowledge and others (Silverstein, Augustyn, Cabral, & Zuckerman, 2016). Students exposed to school violence may be more likely to imitate, and transfer learned behaviours to the classroom setting (McGahaGarnett, 2018). The effects of exposure to school violence on students are prevalent in the classroom setting, and have the tendency for reduced academic ability and performance. Students who are victims or witnesses of bullying within their school environment or neighborhood by their teachers are more likely to associate bullying as a preferred or acceptable style of communication. Students who bully their juniors have increased expectations of negative outcomes (Champion, 2019). For example, a student with an increased desire to fight physically is more likely to expect the targeted student to reciprocate aggressive interactions. Thus, there is an increased need for school personnel to address the process of healthy imitation in young victims of abuse in the school as the higher the likelihood of witnessing school violence, the higher the risk of academic decline and problematic relationships (Haeseler, 2016).

In an academic and social environment, the reactions to school violence may differ basically among various age groups. Some students may internalize abuse-related distress as a harsh consequence to poor or inadequate performance. Fusco and Fantuzzo (2011), found that students lack the ability to understand the dynamics of interparental violence and thus may blame themselves. Self-blame for most students can result in feelings of guilt, worry, and anxiety that may affect academic output and healthy social interactions among them. Other students exposed to school violence are at a greater risk of experiencing delayed physiological, emotional, language, and cognitive development (Carpenter & Stacks, 2011).

Students exposed to school violence are more likely to report stressful life events than non-exposed students. When faced with adversity, junior students who reside within problematic environments may exhibit fewer prosocial emotions and increased personal problems (Sternberg, Lamb, Guterman, and Abbott, 2016). When examining the types of school violence most likely witnessed by students, Ceballo, Dahl, Aretakis, and Ramirez (2011) reported that junior students are more likely to witness school violent interactions than to experience physical abuse. In addition, students tend to witness fewer crime-related traumas such as shooting, shoving, and punching. Given the realistic educational consequences of exposure to school violence on students, it is likely they will need additional resources within the supportive structures of the school environment to address their needs and improve educational outcomes.

The effects of school violence on academic performance and classroom behaviour may differ for adolescents. Youth reared in abusive environments are more likely to exhibit behaviours of concern (Wright and Steinbach, 2011). For example, abused adolescents are more likely to display a lack of interest in social

activities, have lowered self-esteem, avoid peer relations, maintain unhealthy relationships, and exhibit increased rebellion and defiant behaviours in the school environment. Students are within a hostile school environment and lack healthy outlets of support are more likely to witness negative mood provocations with others. Peer victimization and provocation may lead to weapon use, injuries, and multiple abusers (Finkelhor, Turner and Ormrod, 2016). Increased violence and its severity can have an impact on school matters as the majority of school violence is reported in secondary and tertiary institutions. Obilor andIkpa (2021) despite the internal and external effects of school violence, students are more likely to seek help when school violence occurs than are preschool or school-aged students (Fusco andFantuzzo, 2011).

Measures to adopt in Minimizing School Violence

According to Aihie (2009), the most effective way to improve school safety is by implementing a combination of policies, initiatives and security measures. Here are eight popular strategies to reduce violence in schools:

1. Adopt Physical Security Measures

A common way to reduce violence in schools is to implement stronger security measures, such as surveillance cameras, security systems, campus guards and metal detectors.

Surveillance cameras can be placed in hallways, classrooms and near doors to provide school safety personnel the ability to monitor unfamiliar faces, loitering guests and dangerous situations from afar. Install security systems to control building access. Restrict how people enter the school by assigning the main door as the only entrance point and locking all side doors from the exterior. Or, restrict when people enter the school by setting up an alarm that contacts local law enforcement if a door opens outside of regular school hours.

Employ security guards to patrol the school, parking lots, campus grounds and other common areas. Security guards watch for suspicious behaviour and can remove dangerous individuals from school grounds before they cause any harm. Schools with weapon or gang violence issues may implement extreme security measures, such as metal detectors and routine bag searches, to deter students from behaving violently (Aihie, 2009).

2. Implement Policies Designed to Prevent Violence

Policies can improve school safety in two ways. The first way is through deterrence. Zero-tolerance policies will punish those who perpetrate violence and deter students from behaving violently. If a single violation results in punishment, students are less likely to be violent, bring weapons around the school or bully others. **Hang anti-bullying posters in the hallways and classrooms to remind students about the school's commitment to improved safety.** The second way is through fostering an inclusive, safe environment. For students, adopt policies outlining school-wide behavioural expectations that stress positive values such as inclusion, communication and respect. And for your staff, adopt policies outlining the teacher's role in preventing violence. For example, require visitors to wear badges and require teachers to report guests not wearing one.

3. Organize Training Programs for School Personnel

To improve school safety, create a safe, understanding school environment through education and training programs. Nearly all school homicide perpetrators gave at least one warning, such as, making a threat before turning violent. Teaching school personnel the warning signs could prompt them to intervene before situations become violent. Early include: social withdrawal, poor academic performance, and uncontrolled anger, bullying behaviors drug or alcohol (Aihie, 2009).

4. Profile and Counsel At-Risk Individuals

If carried out correctly, identifying and monitoring at-risk children will improve school safety. Identifying potentially violent individual's early means there is more time to steer the student onto a new path, and also ensures that these efforts will be more effective. Employing a qualified mental health professional who has experience handling at-risk children or adolescents may be necessary for some situations. A professional can counsel potentially violent individuals with undivided attention and support that can further prevent dangerous

situations. However, profiling and counselling potentially violent individuals can cause problems. There is a stigma that comes with being labelled as an "at-risk" student. It's important that each step is carried out as professionally and as carefully as possible (Aihie,2009).

5. Develop a Crisis and Emergency Plan

During a crisis, students often go into a state of shock and forget how to react properly. To prevent this from happening in a real emergency, schools have adopted routine fire, natural emergency, evacuation and lockdown drills. Similarly, developing and practicing a crisis and emergency plan will teach school personnel how to respond to questions, how to defuse dangerous situations (if applicable) and keep everyone safe during a violent incident. Your crisis and emergency plan will outline how teachers and other staff members should behave in a situation where a student or visitor is showing imminent warning signs of violence. "Imminent" signs include: fighting with peers, destroying property, self-harming, making violent threats, possessing weapons.

Begin by conducting a risk- and threat-assessment to identify serious potential emergencies. Then, develop and document a step-by-step plan that can be read and practiced routinely. When a crisis strikes, the staff member will be able to reflect on their training and handle it appropriately.

6. Assign Roles for Students, Parents and the Community

School-community partnerships create a safe environment inside schools by creating a safe environment outside of schools. Community watches programs and police surveillance initiatives extend student safety beyond the confines of the schoolyard, effectively reducing the severity and prevalence of violence in schools.

Parents can also play a major role in ending school violence with the right education and support. Include the parents of students in devising plans for improved safety. Teach parents the correct way to speak to their children about bullying, threats and weapons. Encourage students to take responsibility for maintaining a safe space and offer them support when they do. Students may need emotional assistance if they're feeling guilty about resisting peer pressure or reporting a violent friend.

7. Address and Resolve Conflicts the Right Way

Some schools have trained school psychologists or counsellors to mediate violent behaviour, but for the schools that don't, mediation is often one task of many for an administrator. In less dangerous situations, such as a verbal argument with no signs of escalation, there are certain steps the mediator can take to resolve issues effectively.

First, acknowledge that violent tendencies can be the result of several risk factors such as association with troubled peers, community poverty, poor grades, and access to weapons, substance abuse and poor home environment.

Then, create a safe setting. If possible, engage with the violent individual in a semi-private location with a limited number of spectators. A violent individual is more likely to lash out if his or her personal space is disrespected and there is little room to breathe.

When you're in the right setting, discuss the incident. Demonstrate open, calm body language and a tone to match. Treat the perpetrator respectfully, avoiding sarcasm, negative comments and passive-aggressive remarks. The individual may be severely upset, making it difficult to understand complex, long-winded sentences so stick with a basic vocabulary (Aihie, 2009).

Way Forward

Even though, various educational institutions, government, individuals and group have at different times tried to provide solution to curb this heinous crime, little have been achieved in the fight against violence. It is recommended therefore that:

1. Teachers, counsellors, and mental health providers should establish effective partnerships to educate teachers, students and parents on the prevalent types of school violence, the causes and consequences, and possible remedies.

2. The various relevant legislations of Government on violence should be enforced to the letter to serve as deterrent to would-be offenders.

3. Guidance and counselling services, disciplinary and other committees should be established in secondary schools to nip in the bud the causes of school violence, and thus improve the teaching learning environment and by extension students' academic performance.

4. Educators and counsellors can collaborate to maintain a supportive school environment for students and school personnel to minimize school violence and improve the academic performance of students.

Conclusion

There is an increased need to address the effects of violence on academic progress and prosocial classroom behaviour of students. Educators and counsellors can collaborate to maintain a supportive school environment for students and school personnel. Effectively examining academic and non-academic factors in improving classroom performance may eliminate obstacles and barriers to learning motivation and high school completion. Feelings of safety, stability, and predictability are necessary for youths' academic success. Thus, high-risk students who increase school involvement are more likely to experience positive emotions of inclusion, ultimately leading to academic progress and healthy behaviours.

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