

Curbing violence among children through adult education programmes

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ABSTRACT

Children constitute a significant proportion of any nation's population and they are the inheritors of the society. In Nigeria, children hold a great thrust for the future. This paper examined various methods by adult educators in curbing violence among children through various adult education programmes such as literacy education, fundamental education etc. The study was a survey designed to investigate causes, effects and ways of curbing violence among children in Nigeria. Three research questions were formulated and tested for the study. A total of 200 respondents comprising of both teachers and students were selected from 10 public junior secondary schools in Ikeja Local Government Area of Lagos State. An instrument titled "Curbing Violence among Children" was used to collect data. Data were analyzed using frequency tables and percentages. The result revealed that children's violence is mostly caused by family background, peer influence, exposure to violent films, emotional instability and poor child upbringing. Opportunity for sports and other recreational activities, games, debate, excursions, club activities, visitation to schools by parents, establishment of Guidance and Counselling units are some of the strategies suggested for curbing violence among children in the state.

Keywords: Children, violence, causes, effects, curbing violence.

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INTRODUCTION

The National Youth Development Policy (FGN, 2001) defined children to be between the ages of 6 and 18 years and made up about 40 percent of the more than 140 million people in Nigeria. Anasi (2011) asserted that the children occupy a prominent place in any society and children have the potential to develop powerful new skills for action.

Children violence wears many faces. It includes gang activity, locker thefts, bullying and intimidation, gun use, assault—just about anything that produces a victim. Violence is perpetrated against students, teachers and ranges from intentional vendettas to accidental killings of bystanders.

According to Jenkins (1993), exposure to community violence occurs through various modalities that include the media, observation, hearsay and direct contact either as perpetrator or victim.

Children violence is probably as old as mankind

because history revealed that until relatively recent time, children had no right and maltreatment was socially sanctioned as a means of educating and disciplining a child. Abdullah (2014) indicated that in the ancient Roman Empire, the *Patria Potestas* allowed the father to sell, sacrifice, mutilate or kill his off-spring. From the 19th to mid 20th centuries, children came to be viewed with greater affection even when they were expected to learn to control selfish impulses and to acquire traits that would permit them to function satisfactorily in a particular culture. Child rearing practice for the first time became more pre-planned.

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2002) defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation.

Olweus (1999) also confined violence to the use of physical force. He defined violence or violent behaviour as aggressive behaviour where the actor or perpetrator uses his or her own body as an object (including a weapon) to inflict (relatively serious) injury or discomfort upon an individual. According to Blackburn (1993) violence denotes the 'forceful infliction of physical injury'. Violence has been defined in a broader sense to include behaviour by people or against people liable to cause physical or psychological harm (Gulbenkian Foundation, 1995).

From the various definitions above, violence in this paper is defined as any "intentional, non-accidental acts of omission,' on the part of parents or any other person(s) interacting with children aimed at injuring, harming or destroying their futures.

According to the research work conducted by UNICEF in 2007, the report shown that most children failed to report cases of violence in schools because children may not feel able to report acts of violence for the fear of further subjection to punishment by the abuser. Most times both child and abuser may see nothing unusual or wrong in the child being subjected to violence. They may not consider an act of violence actually to be violence at all, perhaps viewing it as justifiable and necessary punishment. The child victim may feel ashamed or guilty, believing that the violence was deserved. This often leads the child to be unwilling to speak about it except for extreme cases that are reported. In this case, violence incidences against children were not properly documented.

This lack of documentation and increasing violence rates against children were part of the reasons for the global in-depth study of violence against children by the UN Secretary General as directed by the General Assembly Resolution 57/90 of 2002 to provide a global picture. The report provided information that various types of violence exist against children within the family, schools, alternative care, institutions, detention facilities, places where children work and communities.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are to:

- i. Determine types of violent acts common to children in the state;
- ii. Find out the common causes of children violent behaviour in children at the school age;
- iii. Determine various ways in curbing violence among the children.

Research questions

This research was carried out to provide answers to the

following research questions:

- i. What are the types of violent acts common to children?
- ii. What are the common causes of children violent?
- iii. In what ways will adult education programmes take to curb violence among children?

Conceptual and theoretical framework

Considering the high prevalence of violence and their linkages among children, the focus of this analysis is the broader subject of violence rather than the narrower one of criminal violence. A violent act may or may not contravene existing legislation and consequently may or may not be labeled as "criminal" by the criminal justice system. What triggers violence among children in Nigeria? What can be done to curb violence? What can be learned from the region's experience with violence? To help answer these questions, this paper presents a classification of types of violence and identifies the principal contributing factors. It also attempts to link recommendations for reducing violence to the factors that generate it. Finally, the paper outlines broad priority areas for future action to reduce violence in the region.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This involved the method and procedures that were followed in carrying out this research. It was discussed under different headings.

Research design

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The adoption of the descriptive survey research was justified by the fact that violent acts among children are a continuous process and to proffer the necessary measures on how to curb them.

Population of the study

The population of the study comprised of all the Junior Public Secondary Schools in Ikeja Local Government Area of Lagos State.

Sample and sampling technique

The sample for the study consisted of 20 respondents from 10 junior secondary schools selected in Ikeja LGA to make a total of 200 respondents.

The random sampling technique was adopted. This was adopted in order to cover all parts of the study area and also to give all units of the population an equal chance of being selected. This technique rules out biases and creates room for credibility, reliability and validity of the study.

Research instruments

A self developed questionnaire was used to collect data from the

respondents in order to give direct information on the subject under study. This questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first part comprised of the demographic information such as the sex and age distribution of the respondent while the second part comprised evaluative close ended items.

Validity of the instrument

The instrument, self developed questionnaire was validated by experts in the field of adult education and modifications were taken to improve the quality of the instrument.

Data collection

The researcher administered the instrument personally with the assistance of 5 trained research assistants for collection of data. In order to facilitate easy understanding and accurate response to the questionnaires, both written and observation schedule concerning the completion of the instrument were presented to the respondents. On the spot, collection was done to ensure a high return rate of the instrument.

Data analysis

The simple percentages and frequency tables were adopted for the analysis of data.

RESULTS

Demographic data of respondents

Demographic data of respondents are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Sex distribution of respondents.

Variables	Frequency	%
Male	124	62.0
Female	76	38.0
Total	200	100.0

Field sampling (January, 2017).

Table 2. Age distribution of respondents.

Variables	Frequency	%
11-15 years (students)	150	75.0
25 years and above (teachers)	50	25.0
Total	100	100.0

Field sampling (January, 2017).

Research question one

What are the types of violent acts common to school children?

Table 3 showed the percentage scores of types of violent acts common to children, prominent among them are physical aggression 74%, fighting 71.5% and stealing 65%. The least identified is abuses 52.5%.

Research question two

What are the common causes of children violent acts in schools?

Table 4 revealed that the common causes of violence behaviour in children among which are exposure to violent films 87.5%, peer group influence 82.5%, family background 80% and emotional instability 78% while the least identified is culture of violence in the society 51.5%.

Research question three

In what ways will adult education programmes take to curb violence among children?

Table 5 revealed that establishment of more welfare centres to correct violent behaviour, the provision of basic needs for children, opportunity for sports and other recreational activities, games, debate, excursions, club activities, establishment of Guidance and Counselling units are some of the strategies suggested for solving violence behaviour of children in schools.

DISCUSSION

Analysis of research question one identified some violent acts common to school children were physical aggression, fighting and stealing were majorly the most common violent acts among children. These aforementioned violent acts common children were supported by Makinde (1993) who noted that physical aggression, fighting, stealing, unrest, revolt, demonstrations and other acts of lawlessness in the society denote to a large extent frequent agitation of children arising from unattended needs or from frustrations and punishment.

Research question two revealed the major causes of violent acts among children. The result revealed that exposure to violent films is majorly one of the factors responsible for the causes of violence among children. This finding also tally with literature evidence that there is consistent evidence that violent imagery in television, film and video, and computer games has substantial short term effects on arousal, thoughts, and emotions, increasing the likelihood of aggressive or fearful behaviour in younger children, especially in boys (Browne and Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2005).

Research question three from findings suggested some ways of curbing violence among children. The study

Table 3. Percentile table showing types of violent acts common to school children.

Items	Positive responses	%	Negative responses	%
Abuses	105	52.5	95	47.5
Physical aggression	148	74	52	26
Bullying other children	115	57.5	85	42.5
Explosive temper tantrums	117	58.5	83	41.5
Fighting	143	71.5	57	28.5
Stealing	130	65	70	35

Field sampling (January, 2017).

Table 4. Percentile table showing common causes of children violent acts in school.

Items	Positive responses	%	Negative responses	%
Culture of violence in the society	103	51.5	97	48.5
Emotional instability	156	78	44	22
Exposure to violent films	175	87.5	25	12.5
Lack of recreational facilities	122	61	78	39
Electricity blackout	112	56	88	44
Peer group Influence	165	82.5	35	17.5
Family background	160	80	40	20
Strike actions of teachers	120	60	80	40

Field sampling (January, 2017).

Table 5. Percentile table showing ways to curb violence among children.

Items	Positive responses	%	Negative responses	%
Establishment of more welfare centres to correct violent behaviour	188	94	12	6
Provision of basic needs for children	180	90	20	10
More time given to sports and other recreational activities on the curriculum	182	91	18	9
Games, debate, excursions and club activities should be encouraged	178	89	22	11
Guidance and counselling units should be established to help students with behavioral problems	140	70	60	30

Field sampling (January, 2017).

identified skill acquisition programmes, enlightenment campaigns, establishment of guidance and counseling units in schools, more time to be dedicated on sports and recreation in school curriculum and establishment of welfare centres to curb violence. This was supported by Floyd (1997) that supportive, nurturing family, interactions with supportive adults, personality traits of perseverance and optimism should be encouraged or modelled to youths. Myers and Taylor (1995) also suggested acquiring social support. All these will help prevent violence among children.

Conclusion

Curbing violence among children is a social vice that is

giving the entire nation sleepless nights. The causes are multifaceted and hence curbing it demands multidimensional approach. The paper believed that effective counselling to children, parents and political leaders at various levels of governance could go a long way in curbing violence among children in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

i. Establishment of more welfare centres to correct violent behaviour, the provision of basic needs for children, opportunity for sports and other recreational activities, games, debate, excursions, club activities, visitation to schools by parents, establishment of Guidance and Counselling units should be adopted as some of the

strategies for solving violence behaviour among children;

- ii. Schools should develop a plan of action in collaboration with parents, teachers, community members as well as health care professionals, law enforcement officers, businesses and other key community groups as violence prevention plans developed in broad consultation and cooperation are more likely to succeed than those prepared by a single group of professionals acting alone;
- iii. Parents and educators should build children resilience and help them to respond to life's challenges constructively;
- iv. The various states agencies for literacy education should periodically organize workshop, seminars and plan programmes through campaigns and rallies to enlighten children on the effects of violence on the national economy;
- v. Finally government should create literacy centers in various Local Government Areas as this will provide educators an avenue to impact their knowledge, skills, experienced and invariably contribute to the problem of youth violence in the society.

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