



IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON ADOLESCENTS' SELF-ESTEEM IN DOMA, NASARAWA STATE.

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ABSTRACT

The study examined impact of domestic violence, the role of parents and family environment on children self - esteem. Sixty four participants were used for the study. Their age ranges from 12 - 18 years. They consisted of 33 females (51.6%) and 31 males (48.4%) randomly selected from Government College Doma and Foundation Integrated College Doma, Nasarawa State. The study used Domestic Violence Scale (DVS) and Index of Self – esteem to measure the Adolescents' self – esteem in Doma. Correlation coefficient and t-test were used for the analysis of data. The results showed that there was an inverse significant relationship between self-esteem and domestic violence [$r(1,64) = - 0.942, p < 0.05$]. Also there was a statistically significant difference between adolescents from violent and non - violent homes on the measure of self-esteem [$t(62) = 10.7, p < 0.05$]. The research concluded that domestic violence has significant negative impact on adolescents' self-esteem. It has been recommended that cordial relationship in the family will help ameliorate the challenges children face in their self-esteem as they grow up in the family.

Keyword: Violence, Domestic violence, Children Self - esteem.

INTRODUCTION

Violence is a universal phenomenon. According to Women Trafficking and Child Labor Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF, 2006) violence takes different dimensions such as political violence, marital violence, public violence, to mention but a few. When violence affects homes, it is described as domestic violence.

Ontario Network of Sexual Assault (2010) defined domestic violence as intimate partner abuse resulting from an imbalance of power and control over one's partner. The organization equally considers it as a crime. This reflects the idea that it is punishable by law. This definition is highly limited in scope in that it only considers a segment of domestic violence. David and Lucile (2007) defined domestic violence in terms of intimate partner's abuse they use partner abuse and inter-parental violence interchangeable with domestic violence. This definition is also limited in scope because child abuse is excluded. National Clearinghouse on Family Violence (2007) refers to it as abuse of power, abuse of trust or abuse of dependency within the family. This definition, though complex in usage of words such as power, trust and dependency, captured the various dimensions of family/domestic violence.

Domestic violence is not limited to a particular violence behavior emitted by father against mother or its reverse or parents against children. In most cases, people assume that it is the parents that are guilty of violence against the children (Carlson, 1984). Situations abound in which children engage in violence is so complex that a good definition should capture all the facets of it. Most definitions of family violence are flawed in their limiting the definitions to a particular dimension of violence. This emanates as a result of the author's study and the depth of understanding of the complexity of family violence.

Initially, it was thought that one could only experience violence outside the family, but recent occurrences have proven this wrong. Newspaper reads out baths, setting someone ablaze, knife stabbing, strangulations, poisoning of foods, matcheting, even to death, occurring within the family setting. The incidence and prevalence of domestic violence is alarming and has reached a catastrophic level requiring a state of emergency across the violence (NCHFV, 2004). To buttress the above, Volpe (1996) persists that domestic violence is widespread and occurs among all socio-economic groups. In a national survey of over 6,000 American families, it was estimated that between 52% and 70% of male batterers (i.e those who assault their wives) also frequently abused their children (Straus & Gelles, 1990). Other research suggests that women who have been hit by their husbands were twice as likely as other women to abuse a child (CWP, 1995).

In a national survey of parents in the United States of America, Straus and Gelles (1986) found that 10% of the parents use severe forms of punishment such as kicking,

biting, punching, hitting with a hand or an object or wielding a gun or knife against their children. Mothers were severely violent toward their children perhaps because they spend more time with them (Gelles & Straus, 1988). Boys were more than girls to have violence inflicted upon them by their parents (Gelles & Cornell, 1985). Domestic Violence had attracted much attention within the past three decades, though it has always been there, but the enormity of its prevalence has presently reached an alarming rate. This situation has attracted research interest in psychology, sociology and other related discipline such as criminology. The scholars in these fields have attempted to conceptualize, explain and find lasting solution to this social menace.

The extent to which violence affects homes depends on the level of its occurrence in the individual family. According to National Clearinghouse Family (NCFV, 2010), the aftermath effects and implications of domestic violence on adult members' experience influence the role of the parents and family environment throughout life and their attitude towards children . It is a known fact that children are among the most vulnerable groups in every society. Children in homes where there is domestic violence are more likely to be abused and/or neglected. The NCFV (2010) continued, even if a child is not physically harmed, he or she may have emotional and behavioral problems and they can feel helpless, scared and upset. Children are harmed just by seeing and hearing about violence. Children from violence homes may not get the care they need and they can have trouble in school and getting along with others. The children may often feel sad and scared most of the time. They may also grow up feeling bad about themselves.

In fact, according to Windom (2009) explanation, the Cycle of violence abusements and neglect during childhood makes people more likely to abuse their own children. This notion suggests that violence is perpetuated as each generation learns from the preceding one; and how to behave abusively (Hansen, 1993; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2009). For most people, the family is a shelter from the storms of the outside world, a secure base from which to cope with stressful times. But for a significant number; family life is a source of stress (Straus, 2004).

According to the family system theory, Lang (1981) and Bowend (1994) posited that family members are tied together in an intricate web of relationships, and what one member does automatically affects the other members and the family system itself.

The stress within family environment is usually of great magnitude and it explodes on the individuals who have little resistance to it. And the family, that is expected to shield the individual from this menace, not only fails to do so, but extensively enkindles the effects via abuse and neglect with little or no support system. Research indicates that most American parents approve of spanking and slapping their children and almost two out of three parents do so most of the time (Straus, 1994). Even through spanking and slapping are clearly violent behaviors, they are not generally viewed as child abuse in the American society.

Over three million children are at risk of exposure to parental violence each year in USA (Carlson, 1984). Children from homes where domestic violence occurs are physically or sexually abused and/or seriously neglected at a rate 15 times the national averages (Mckay, 2011). Approximately 45% to 70% of battered women in shelters have reported the presence of child abuse in their home (Meichenbaum, 1994). About two thirds of abuse children, they are three times more likely to have been abused by their fathers (Volpe, 1996). In American studies of the incidence of physical and sexual violence in the lives of children suggest that this form of violence can be viewed as a serious public health problem (Volpe, 1996). State agencies reported approximately 2011,000 confirmed cases of child physical abuse as a result of maltreatment (Volpe, 1996). It has been estimated that about 1 in 5 female children and 1 in 10 male children may experience sexual molestation (Regier & Cowdry, 1995., WOTCHEF & NAPTIP, 2004).

National survey data in U.S. indicate that over 60% of rape victims are under the age of eighteen. At least out of 2,000 children in a year, five each day die at the hands of their parents or caretakers (Cavaliere, 1995, Geles and Connell, 1990; NCCAN, 1988). David Findelhor and Jennifer Dziubu - Leatherman (1994) conclude that available evidence "Strongly suggests that children are more victimized than adults are". Like partner aggression, child abuse is multiply determined. Among the factors Associated with child abuse are personal characteristics of the abusing parent such as personality and substance abuse); and of the child i.e, younger children are more often by family's social isolation; marital conflict; and abusing parents having been abused as children (Belsky, 1993; Davies & Cunnings, 1994; Herzbege, 1996). What actually constitutes domestic violence? To answer this, Rouuchelle (2007) opined that domestic violence does not necessarily have to be physical. Since abuse is

a pattern of behaviour in which physical violence and/or emotional coercion is/are used to gain and maintain power or control in a relationship, it therefore entails physical, Sexual, Psychological/emotional or economic attacks, all perpetrating domestic violence (National Violence Against Women Survey, 1996). This implies that both men and women are prone to and guilty of domestic violence crime.

Domestic violence impacts children in various ways. These include self blame, guilt and shame, extreme shyness, loneliness, sadness, social withdrawal, separation anxiety, intrusive thoughts, insecure attachment to parents or caregivers, mental developmental delay, extreme negative self-perception, just to mention but a few (NCHFV, 2007). Considering the foregoing, the present study is much interested in the impact of domestic violence on children's self-esteem. Hence, one societal belief that should be widely held at this 21st century is that we should do everything we can to nurture people's self-esteem.

For the purpose of this study, domestic violence or family violence can be described as the exhibition of physical, verbal, economical and/or psychological attack by a family member against another member of the same family. The family in question here is not just nuclear family; the extended family is equally inclusive. It could include the house helps who are adopted within the same house (Ontario Network of Sexual Assault (2010).

Self-esteem is a widely used concept both in popular language and in psychology. Self-esteem is generally considered the evaluative component of the self-concept. Broader representation of the self that includes cognitive and behavioral aspects as well as evaluative or affective ones (Blascovich & Tormak, 2009). While the construct is most often used to refer to a global sense of self-worth, narrower concepts such as self-confidence or body-self-esteem are used to imply a sense of self-esteem in more specific domains (Alder and Stewart. 2004). Self-esteem is a strong index behind so many behaviours and the social functioning of an individual. Such socio-psychological functioning is observed in the areas of learning, heterosexual relationships, work behaviours etc (Iroegbu, 1987). Sorensen (2002) posits that low self-esteem begins at childhood stage. It then implies that high self-esteem also begins at childhood stage, not all children have an overall positive image of themselves. Foddis (2002) believes that many factors influence our self-esteem and that parent and significant others can make the roads to self-esteem easier or difficult.

Current perspectives view the development of self-esteem from childhood through adolescence as an ongoing complex interaction of processes between children's genetic make-up and their family, social, and cultural context (Trzesniewski, Donnellan, & Robins, 2013). In fact, even though many classic developmental theories emphasize the role of environmental factors, such as relationships with parents and peers, in the construction of a mature sense of self (Harter 2012). Moving forward, several studies have been conducted on the influence of domestic violence on self-esteem. Take for instance, Moses (2018) in his research on domestic violence, mental health problems and, self-esteem among urban adolescents, found out that there was a positive relationship between domestic violence and self-esteem among adolescents. In the same vein, Cameranesi and Piotrowski (2017) indicated in the result of their research on the review of self-esteem in children exposed to intimate partner violence that, children exposed to intimate partner violence have reduced self-esteem. Similarly, MacDonnell (2012); Wood and Sommers (2011) found out in their independent study that children's exposure to intimate partner violence significantly have a long term consequences on self-esteem in adulthood. Furthermore, Uchenna, Bisong and Etuk (2011) found out in their research that emotional abuse (through domestic violence) negatively affect the students' self-concept in terms of social-self, physical-self, moral-self, family-self and financial self-concept respectively. In the same vein, Guille (2004) suggested that self-esteem and locus of control contribute to the children's ability to cope with IPV, since children who feel in control of their life circumstances and who have feelings of positive self-worth may be less affected by the adversities they are facing. Moreover, Holt et al. (2008) posited that those children who live in IPV-affected families and have higher self-esteem in one domain, such as academics, may choose to focus on that area of their life in order to obtain an effective distraction from their violent family context (Holt, Buckeley, & Whelan, 2008). Interestingly, Huth-Bocks et al. (2001) through their also found that preschoolers exposed to IPV reported lower self-esteem than non-exposed preschoolers (Huth-Bocks, Levendosky, & Semel, 2001), while others have found lower self-esteem in school age children exposed to IPV as compared to children who were not exposed (McGee 2000).

It is also interesting to know that harmonious relationship that exists among siblings has a significant relationship with self-esteem. This was indicated in the research of

Buist and Vermande (2014) who investigated how similar typologies of sibling relationships were linked with global self-esteem in middle childhood, and found that children with harmonious sibling relationships reported significantly higher self-esteem than children with either conflictual or affect-intense relationships. This simply means that a home where siblings, cousins, nephews etc are fighting each other may induce low self-esteem in the younger ones who are witnessing the events. Since a child spends a large portion of his or her time with parents and caregivers at home and learns much, especially style of living in the family, then any change in the family is bound to affect the child's self-esteem. Since the family plays the role of cultural instillation and socialization of the child, domestic violence will certainly influence the child in one way or the other. The study therefore is out to examine the effect of domestic violence on the development of the child's self-esteem.

Nigeria is one of the societies that recorded the highest rate of domestic violence in the world (Balogun & John-Akinola, 2015; Linos et al., 2013; Aihie, 2009). It is worthy of note that, just like other developing countries, there is a paucity of information on the nationwide official statistical data on the prevalence of domestic violence in Nigeria (Olayanju, Naguib, Nguyen, Bali, & Vung, 2013).

Domestic violence is one of the mental health problems affecting the functioning of individual's self in numerous areas of endeavor (Huesmann, 1997). Research has shown that hearing or seeing domestic violence traumatizes children psychologically and has a devastating impact on their emotional, behavioral, and psychological wellbeing (Kids Voice Guardian Episode Guide, 2003). The KVGEG research statistics in U.S.A suggest that children who witness domestic violence are 24% times more likely to commit sexual assault crime, 50% times more likely to develop substance abuse problems, 75% times more likely to commit crimes against another person, 6% times more likely to commit suicide. Domestic violence can inflict severe psychological and physical damage on a victim. Regardless of whether someone is a recipient of the cause or the abuse, the harm can be just as detrimental (NCFV, 2010). Eric (2006) inferred that low self-esteem lies at the bottom of many of society's problems. Children with low self-esteem feel that the important adults and peers in their lives do not accept them, do not care about them very much, and would not go out their way to ensure their safety and well-being (Eric, 2006).

The Nigerian schools have a large proportion of problem-behaving children who exhibit tantrums as a result of depleted self-confidence. It is not doubt that some children come to school on daily basis in a very bad mood, sobbing, and less attentive in the class. The aftermath is poor academic performance. The situation is that, children often leave the teachers confused as to the cause and what to do to resolve the problems.

The society is seeking for good leaders who will lead the nation aright. These children are the leaders of tomorrow, but is it the battered, rejected, dejected and abused child that will offer sound leadership to the nation? It goes to say that a nation laden with domestic violence is doomed, since it will keep producing low spirited individuals.

Equally, the nation's economy depends on individuals who will make positive inputs. The banking sector for instance, requires young graduates who believe in their abilities. The banks depend on them for profits maximization and optimization. If we allow the perpetration of domestic violence to continue unabated, the children raised in such homes will be psychologically destroyed; will drop out of school, which will invariably impact negatively on the nation policy bringing about stagnation in economic, educational, and technological development.

It is as a result of the devastating effect of low self-esteem has on children's physical, social and psychological well-being that this research was conducted. High self-esteem is usually viewed as a forerunner of success and accomplishment while low self-esteem is seen as a problem to be remedied (Bushman, Bemeuster & Campbell, 2000). In consideration of the implication of the above, therefore, the study aims to find out the profiles of the children and create awareness in the Nigeria society of the impact of domestic violence on children's self-esteem.

The findings from this research work will be relevant to the entire Nigerian society, it will add to the existing body of knowledge on domestic violence and self-esteem. Again, the findings from the study will be of significant benefit to parents in avoiding family violent practices and to imbibe healthy approaches of child rearing to enhance their children's self-esteem and subsequent success in life.

Furthermore the findings from this study will enable teachers to know and identify symptoms of domestic violence in children and proffer solution to them; while the

children on the other hand, will learn how to boost their self-esteem and this will reduce the cycle of domestic violence.

METHOD

Design

The study adopted survey method of data collection. It used a two-factor test design for the analysis of the data.

Participants

The participants of the study were secondary school children whose ages were 10-14 years in Doma Local Government. Both male and females participated in the study. The simple random sampling techniques used to select participant for the study. This gives the students equal chance of participating in the research. A total of 560 participants were drawn from the pool of student to participate in the research.

Instruments

The instruments of the study were adopted Domestic Violence Scale (DVS) which measures domestic violence. The test was developed by Walter W Hudson (1982). It is a 25 items Likert-like questionnaire, with five response options ranging from none of the time, most of the time, a little of the time, some of the time and a good part of the time. The scoring was in order of their presentation, and also comprise of both direct scoring and reverse scoring items.

Procedure

The researcher used reach assistants who were also the staff of the said schools, to administer the instruments to the participants. The techniques of the administration followed the required ethical code. The researcher went to the selected schools and sought the consent of the students

Statistics

Person's product correlation was employed for the data analyses to assess the relationship between all the demographic variables, domestic violence, and self-esteem. A t-test analysis was also conducted to test the difference between the self-esteem of children from violent and non-violent homes.

Results

The results indicate a significant inverse relationship between domestic violence and children self-esteem [$r(1,64)=0.942^*$, $p<05$]. This implies that the higher the domestic violence, the lower the self-esteem which was reported in about 94% of cases. Therefore, the hypothesis which stated that there will be a significant relationship between domestic violence and children's self-esteem was accepted.

A t-test result also indicated a significance difference between the self-esteem of adolescents who came from violent homes and those from non-violent homes [$t(62)=10.7$, $p<0.05$]. Therefore, the hypothesis which stated that there will be a significant difference in self-esteem between adolescents from violent and non-violent home was accepted.

Discussion

From the results obtained, the analysis conducted showed that there was an inverse relationship between self-esteem and domestic violence. This results implies that the higher the exposure to domestic violence, the lower the self-esteem of adolescents becomes.

The results of the present finding is in support of the findings of previous researches such as Moses (2018); Cameranesi and Piotrowski (2017); MacDonnell, (2012); Wood and Sommers, (2011); Uchenna, Bisong and Etuk (2011); and Huth-Bocks, Levendosky, & Semel, 2001) who found out that the self-esteem of adolescents who were exposed to domestic violence reduced. But this finding was in contrary to the report of Holt et al. (2008) whose result indicated that domestic violence enhances high self-esteem.

The findings also indicated that adolescents from non-violent homes report more high self-esteem than children from violent homes. This finding supported the work of (N.C.F.V, 2007) that domestic violence influences children's at various level which include extreme low self-confidence (N.C.F.V, 2007). So, if a child is not physically harmed, he or she will have emotional and behavioural problem, by mere seeing and hearing the violence inherent in their homes.

Conclusion/ Recommendation

The impact of domestic violence on children's has been an issue of concern across the globe with major trend on children abuse and neglect. This research study seeks to know the relationship between domestic violence and children's self-esteem.

However, adequate monitoring, well parental roles, consistent affection, opening communication etc are paramount factors in positives and effective development of high self-esteem, aggression, over reaction, punishment should be avoided to improve positive high self-esteem, provision of the child needs and creation of suitable environment for the child may prevent low self-esteem and improve high self-esteem.

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

- i. There should be open line of communication (i.e, communication should be directional).
- ii. Since domestic violence and adolescents' self-esteem are associated, parental acceptance and allowing freedom within well-prescribed limits are important determinant of quality mental health life.
- iii. Parent should have a consistently clear rules and expectations.
- iv. Parent and care-giver should listen openly and calmly to children.
- v. Allow children who are survivors of domestic violence to break the silence about the violence in their lives.

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