

STUDENTS PERCEPTION OF THE IMPACT OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND GENDER DIFFERENCE ON MALADAPTIVE BEHAVIOURS AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN OWERRI MUNICIPAL AREA COUNCIL OF IMO STATE

By

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Abstract

The study investigated the Students Perception of the Impact of Child Sexual Abuse and Gender Difference on Maladaptive behaviours among Adolescents in Owerri Municipal Area Council of Imo State. The study consists of a total sample size of 135 Senior Secondary II students comprising of 78 (57.8%) male and 57(42.2%) female students. A 10 item researcher developed questionnaire titled "Impact of Child Sexual Abuse and Gender Difference on Maladaptive behaviours among Adolescents Questionnaire" was used, it had a reliability coefficient of 0.87. Two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significant levels. The Pearson's product moment correlation (PPMC) and independent t-tests were used to test the hypotheses, the results of the data analysis for the first hypothesis showed that the r-calculated of 0.298 is greater than r-critical of 0.174, at 0.05 level of significance. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, while the results of the data analysis showed in the second hypothesis that the calculated t-cal which is 0.070 is lesser than the critical t- ratio of 1.96, given 133 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. This led to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. Among the recommendation is the fact that Formulation of policy framework / guideline for the child abuse free policy will help to facilitate the establishment of enabling environment for the prevention and mitigation of the impact of child sexual abuse on the psychosocial adjustment of adolescent. The framework will facilitate the establishment of sustainable interventions to address sexual abuse against children in schools.

Keywords: Child Sexual Abuse, Maladaptive behaviour, Adolescents

Introduction

Of recent, many factors have worked to undermine the progress and future of Nigerian children. Among such factors are corruption, bad governance, sub-standard parenting, ethical dysfunction among others: corruption is a super factor in the evil act of destruction of the future and lives of the children. Bad governance at different levels also plays a significant role. Substandard parenting which pushes children in the direction of malfunctioning society. Also ethical dysfunctions in the society are destructively offensive to children. Unfortunately the directions of the lives of these children are taking is becoming increasingly defined by tragedies, deaths, pains, accidents, disappointments, sorrow and other dangerous scenarios due to the circumstances they are exposed to. Many were and continue to be victims of deadly bombings, horrific armed robberies, deadly diseases, rapes, killings and other challenging conditions (May-Chahal, 2014).

The National Centre on Child Abuse and Neglect defines child sexual abuse as: "Contacts or interactions between a child and an adult when the child is being used for

sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or another person is in a position of power or control over the victim. Sexual abuse occurs any time that a child is engaged in a sexual situation with an older person (Townsend, 2013). It can include actual physical contact, such as fondling or rape-making a child watch sexual acts or pornography; making a child look at an adult's genitals, digital (finger) penetration; exhibitionism; fondling a child's genitals; having intercourse with a child; having oral sex with a child; having sex in front of a child; having a child touch an older person's genitals; incest; or sodomy. Sexual abuse is the most under-reported form of child maltreatment because of the secrecy or "conspiracy of silence" that so often characterizes these cases (Ifeluni, 2015).

Most abusers are members of the victim's family, either a caretaker or parent or a close relative. Perpetrators can be fathers, mothers, siblings, or other relatives; childcare professionals or babysitters; clergy, teachers, or athletic coaches; foster parents or host families of foreign-exchange students; neighbours or friends; strangers (Nwamuo, 2010). Contrary to common belief, males and females perpetrate abuse against their own children at surprisingly similar rates. Sexual abusers are mostly males. Men and women inflict physical and emotional abuse, and women make up most of the cases of neglect. Most of the women prosecuted for neglect are single mothers (Townsend, 2013). In child sexual abuse, the caretaker appears extremely protective or jealous of child and encourages child to engage in prostitution or sexual acts. It is likely that the abuser was sexually abused as a child and has difficulty in interacting emotionally with adults. The perpetrator may be experiencing marital difficulties and misuses alcohol or other drugs.

Orthodox Approaches in Physical Violence to Children Unlike child sexual abuse, 'physical abuse' is defined through the obligation to care, a duty that usually rests with the parent. For example the World Health Organisation (2000) states that 'physical abuse of a child is defined as those acts of commission by a care giver that cause actual physical harm or have the potential for harm'. They maintained that, 'Child abuse' is generally specified along such dimensions as physical, sexual, neglectful, emotional. In the case of physical and emotional abuse and neglect, indicators of these dimensions are aspects of the physical condition of the body, for instance, healing fractures, bruising, bites, burns, weight, or actions likely to cause injury such as hitting with a hard implement, shaking combined with identification of a person responsible from within the family.

However, according to May-Chahal (2014), child abuse has come to represent a particular, negatively constructed, immoral set of actions that link to blame, stigma, criminalisation and pain. It has created its own hegemonic discourse that constructs interpersonal violence in specific ways. 'Gender' as a variable is restricted to descriptive power and loses any explanatory or relational force. It is not helpful either for understanding or prevention of childhood violence to use either 'abuse' or 'sex' as variables. There is a need for much greater specificity within the child violence field. It is clear, and unsurprising, that gender is implicated in these social relations as it is in all social relations.

Research on community samples in countries where the physical disciplining of children remains legal find high levels of corporal punishment and a general acceptability of 'mild' physical punishment such as slapping with an open hand (Creighton & Russell, 2007). Studies in the UK by Newson & Newson (2010) and (Smith 2005) both show that approximately 9 out of every 10 children are smacked. In the latter study it was found that most children receive mild punishment but that 15% had experiences which could be categorised as severe. In the prevalence study by (Cawson 2012). 72% of respondents had experience some form of physical discipline. As with child sexual abuse (CSA) victim and assailant is treated as a variable but gender differences are rarely discussed, and neither is

the distinction between violence inside and outside the family. The findings on victim 'sex' vary. For example, two US studies find that males are more likely to be victims but in the UK there do not appear to be any significant differences. Most studies find that mothers or female carers are assailants in equal or greater proportion to fathers or father figures. When asked which parent or carer was responsible for the violence, Cawson (2012) found 51% female respondents identified their mothers or step-mothers and 47% identified their fathers or step-fathers. Forty eight percent of male respondents identified their mothers/step-mothers and 50% identified their fathers/step-fathers as responsible. Thus, in intra-familial child violence, females appear to be responsible for the violence and also victims in more or less equal numbers to males.

Cawson (2012) found that 31% of respondents had been bullied during their childhood by their peers and 3% had been bullied by adults. There were no significant sex differences in terms of overall bullying which included verbal and psychological violence as well as physical violence. According to study the Federal Ministry of Education (2007), it was found that across region, physical violence was more prevalent in the rural areas (90%) than urban areas (80%). A comparison of the prevalence of violence in the Northern and the Southern part of the country reveal that all forms of violence are more in the south than in the north except for sexual violence. Physical violence is higher in the south (90%) compared to the north (79%). Psychological violence is 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 health-related violence. Sexual violence was however more prevalent in the north (4.7%) than in the south (3.2%). Across gender; physical and psychological violence are almost evenly distributed among males and females in basic education in Nigeria.

May-Chahal (2014) posits that salient findings from reviewing the empirical evidence base for all forms of child maltreatment are that; girls are more likely to experience sexual abuse than boys; men are more likely to perpetrate sexual violence with force than women; boys and girls are equally likely to experience physical violence within their households; women and men are equally likely to perpetrate physical violence on boys and girls at equivalent rates in their households; boys are more likely to experience physical assault outside the home; girls are more likely to experience sexual and verbal assault both inside and outside the home, and more likely to experience this violence outside it; boys are more likely to experience neglect most of which is supervisory neglect; women are more likely than men to be held responsible for protecting children, both inside and outside the home. This study intends to investigate the Impact of Child Sexual Abuse and Gender Difference on Maladaptive behaviours among Adolescents.

Statement of the problem

Maladaptive behaviours among adolescents in contemporary times have been seen to emanate from their childhood experiences both at homes, schools and the society. These behaviour emanates as the child is growing up and are unable to get into viable relationships or adapt to conditions they find themselves, some grow up with aggressive behaviours, some end up been violent and unfriendly. These maladaptive behaviours are caused mainly amongst other factors such as sexual abuse which comes sometimes from relatives, parents or outsiders informs of rape and molestations. They may include actual physical contact, such as fondling or rape, making a child watch sexual acts or pornography; making a child look at an adult's genitals, digital (finger) penetration; exhibitionism; fondling a child's genitals; having intercourse with a child; having oral sex with a child; having sex in front of a child; having a child touch an older person's genitals; incest; or sodomy. Child sexual

abuse is one of the most under-reported form of child maltreatment because of the secrecy or "conspiracy of silence" that so often characterizes these cases, the researchers also intend to find out if there are sex differences in this sexual child abuse. Due to the negative effect of this phenomenon, the researchers intend to bridge this gap by finding out the impact of gender difference and sexual abuse on maladaptive behaviour among Adolescents.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between sexual child abuse and Maladaptive behaviour among adolescents in Owerri Municipal Area council of Imo State.
2. There is no significant gender difference in child sexual abuse on maladaptive behaviour among adolescents in Owerri Municipal Area council of Imo State.

Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design with the aim of determining the relationship between sexual child abuse and Maladaptive behaviour among adolescents male and female participants in the SSII. The target population for this study comprised all senior secondary school II (SSII) male and female students in Co-educational senior secondary schools in Owerri Municipal Area council of Imo State. One hundred and thirty-five (135) participants were finally used for the study comprising of 78 males and 57 females, who filled and returned their questionnaire. Purposive sampling technique was used to select six schools for the study. The reason for purposive sampling was to use co-educational schools. Simple random sampling was used to draw the sample of 135 male and female students.

Instrumentation

A self-constructed questionnaire titled "Impact of Child Sexual Abuse and Gender Difference on Maladaptive behaviours among Adolescents Questionnaire" was used. This questionnaire was developed by the researchers to include all the variables in the study. The questionnaire is divided into two sections: the first section contains the demographic data of the respondents while the second section comprised 10 item statements that will determine the impact of child abuse on psycho-social adjustment of adolescent. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a test, re-test method was used and administered to a few students outside the participants twice within two weeks interval. The questionnaire was also given to experts in Guidance and Counselling and Measurement and Evaluation to examine using face validity and cross check the items using the content validity procedure a reliability coefficient of 0.87 was obtained Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

Procedure

The researchers got the permission of the management of the secondary schools used for the study and also sought the consent of the participants. The researcher with two research assistants administered questionnaires to the participants. The questionnaire took 25 minutes to complete and was collected back the same day by the researchers for analysis. This was done to ensure high rate of return.

Data Analysis

Data collected were analysed using Pearson's Product Moment correlation to find out if a relationship exists and the Independent t-test was used to test if a significant gender difference exists in sexual child abuse among adolescents.

RESULT

There is no significant relationship between Sexual child abuse and Maladaptive behaviour among Adolescents in Owerri Municipal Area council of Imo State

Table 1: Correlation Coefficient between Sexual child abuse and maladaptive behaviour among adolescents.

Variable	N	Mean	Sd	r-cal	r-critical	Remarks
Sexual Child Abuse	135	21.80	2.94	0.298	0.174	Significant
Maladaptive behaviour	135	18.97	3.48			

p> 0.05; r-cal= 0.298 , r-critical= 0.174

As revealed in Table 1, the results of the data analysis showed that the r-calculated of 0.298 is greater than r-critical of 0.174, at 0.05 level of significance. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This means that there is a significant relationship between Sexual Child abuse and maladaptive behaviour among adolescents.

There is no significant Gender difference in Sexual child abuse on Maladaptive behaviour among Adolescents.

Table 2: Table showing Gender difference in sexual child abuse among Adolescents

Variable	N	Mean	Sd	Df	t-cal	t-critical	Remarks
Male	71	21.81	2.71	133	0.070	1.96	Not Significant
Female	64	21.78	3.20				

p> 0.05, df=133; t-cal= 0.070; t-critical= 1.96

As revealed in Table 2, the results of the data analysis shows that the calculated t-ratio of 0.070 is lesser than the critical t- ratio of 1.96, given 133 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. This leads to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This means that there is no significant difference in Sexual Child abuse among adolescent.

Discussion of findings

Regarding relationship between child sexual abuse and Maladaptive behaviour among Adolescents revealed that the hypothesis was rejected, this means that a significant relationship existed between child sexual abuse and maladaptive behaviour among adolescents. This finding corroborates the research by Creighton & Russell (2012) on community samples in countries where the physical disciplining of children remains legal, High levels of corporal punishment and a general acceptability of ‘mild’ physical punishment such as slapping was found to be related to how adolescents adapts and behave towards family and friends.

Again, considering gender difference occurring in child sexual abuse, the result from this study shows that there is no significant difference in child abuse among adolescents, according to our findings. This implies that males and females experience has no significant difference in the level of child sexual abuse. This finding is however contrary to findings by May-Chahal (2014) who posits that salient findings from reviewing the empirical evidence base for all forms of child maltreatment are that; girls are more likely to experience sexual violence than boys; men are more likely to perpetrate sexual violence with force than women; boys and girls are equally likely to experience physical violence within their households; women and men are equally likely to perpetrate physical violence on boys and girls at equivalent rates in their households; boys are more likely to experience physical

assault outside the home; girls are more likely to experience sexual and verbal assault both inside and outside the home, and more likely to experience this violence outside it; boys are more likely to experience neglect (most of which is supervisory neglect); women are more likely than men to be held responsible for protecting children, both inside and outside the home. This contrary finding could be due to culture and predisposition of the respondents when the research was carried out.

Conclusion

Maladaptive behaviours among children vary depending on the circumstances of abuse or neglect, personal characteristics of the child, and the child's environment. Consequences may be mild or severe; disappear after a short period or last a lifetime; and affect the child physically, psychologically, behaviourally, or in some combination of all three ways. Ultimately, due to related costs to public entities such as the health-care, human services, and educational systems, abuse and neglect impact not just the child and family, but society as a whole. Therefore, it is imperative for communities to provide a framework of prevention strategies and services before abuse and neglect occur and to be prepared to offer remediation and treatment when necessary.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made;

1. Guidance and counselling in the prevention and mitigation of the impact of child abuse against children should be practiced. While teachers are inevitably identified as central to improving the learning conditions and safety for pupils, professional development opportunities that build these capabilities are often missing. Thus, deliberate effort at establishing / strengthening counselling services in schools and the society at large must be initiated with a view to protecting children from various types of child abuse.
2. Specifically, child maltreatment free consciousness must be promoted among adolescents, teachers and other members of the school communities including parents. There should be regular seminars on prevention, publications to educate the children, teachers, parents and care givers on acceptable non-violent behaviours.
3. The promotion of life skills to help psychosocial adjustment among abused children in schools and the communities must be prioritized. Where appropriate, co-curricular activities should be established and intervention and prevention strategies should be encouraged.
4. Inter-sectoral partnerships between the school and other relevant ministries/of government at state and Federal Levels, and civil society must be encouraged to re-enforce intervention and prevention strategies on child sexual abuse, as well as provide a broader avenue for rehabilitation of victims in the communities.

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