



Domestic Abuse and Antisocial Behaviour among Students in Aba Education Zone

Ngozi A. Amazu^{1*} and Patricia I. Enang¹

¹Faculty of Education, University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author NAA designed the study, managed the literature searches, performed the statistical analysis and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author PIE supervised the study. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Aims: This study sought to determine how variables of domestic abuse (physical maltreatment, domestic enslavement, and verbal abuse of children by parents/guardians) contribute to the prevalence of antisocial behaviour among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone of Abia State, Nigeria.

Study Design: The study adopted the *ex-post facto* survey design.

Population of Study: The Population of the study comprised all the 5, 605 senior secondary school students in Aba education Zone during the period of this study.

Methodology: The multi-stage random sampling procedure was used to select 1400 adolescents, which is 25% of the population, for the study. The instrument used in data collection was the researcher-made Domestic Abuse and Antisocial Behaviour Questionnaire. The reliability of the instrument was .86 Cronbach's Alpha. Independent t-test was used to analyse data for hypotheses testing. The independent variables were used as the grouping variable and the grouping was done based on the students' scores on each variable.

Results: The result of independent samples t-test conducted to test the research hypotheses showed that: (1) There was a significant influence of parents' physical maltreatment of children on

antisocial behaviour (M1=36.89, M2=29.20; SD1=9.491, SD2=8.984); conditions: $t(1398)=7.825$, $P=0.000$, $\alpha =.05$. (2) There was a significant influence of domestic enslavement of children on antisocial behaviour (M1=35.81, M2=29.12; SD1=8.954, SD2=9.024); conditions: $t(1398)=7.804$, $P =0.000$, $\alpha =.05$. (3) There was a significant influence of verbal abuse of children on antisocial behaviour (M1=38.93, M2=27.04; SD1=8.762, SD2=7.452); conditions: $t(1398)= 23.88$, $P =0.000$, $\alpha =.05$.

Conclusion: Students who were physically maltreated at home were more prone to manifesting antisocial behaviour. Domestic enslavement induces negative emotions with antisocial implications. Parental verbal abuse begets in the children the tendency to use abusive words on peers at school.

Keywords: Peer group; peer victimization; educational psychology; school counselling.

1. INTRODUCTION

Domestic abuse which subsumes domestic violence, spousal abuse, family violence, dating abuse and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), is a pattern of behaviour which involves the abuse by one person of the other in an intimate relationship such as marriage, cohabitation, dating or within the family [1]. Domestic abuse can take various forms such as physical abuse, domestic enslavement, and verbal abuse. Verbal abuse is a form of abuse involving the use of dilatory languages such as threats, name-calling, blaming, ridicule, disrespect, and criticism. Less obviously, aggressive forms of verbal abuse include statements that may seem benign on the surface that are thinly veiled attempts to humiliate, falsely accuse, or manipulate others to submit to undesirable behaviour, make others feel unwanted and unloved [2].

It has been suspected that the various forms of domestic abuse experienced by children may be responsible for the numerous cases of antisocial behaviour reported among secondary school students. The Crime and Disorder Act [3] defined antisocial behaviour as behaviour which causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons. Antisocial behaviour can range from serious acts of violence and harassment to more everyday incidents such as noise, nuisance or vandalism and may or may not amount to a criminal act ACDA [3].

A child's behaviour might also signal that something is wrong. Victims of physical abuse may be withdrawn or may display aggressive behaviour, complain of soreness or uncomfortable movement because of pain, wear clothing that is inappropriate for the weather, or express discomfort with physical contact [4,5]. All these effects of domestic abuse

will go a long way in instilling in the children negative or antisocial behaviour outside the home.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine the influence of selected domestic abuse variables on antisocial behaviour among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone, Abia State Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. How parents' physical maltreatment of children on antisocial behaviour among secondary school students.
2. How domestic enslavement of children on antisocial behaviour among secondary school students.
3. How parents' verbal abuse on children on antisocial behaviour among secondary school students.

1.2 Null Hypotheses

1. There is no significant influence of parents' physical maltreatment of children on antisocial behaviour among secondary school students.
2. There is no significant influence of domestic enslavement of children on antisocial behaviour among secondary school students.
3. There is no significant influence of parents' verbal abuse on children on antisocial behaviour among secondary school students.

1.3 Review of Literature

Adeyemi and Adu [6] examined antisocial behaviour among secondary school students in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The ex-post facto research

design was used for the study. The population consisted of 694 secondary schools in the state. Out of this, a sample of 520 was selected through Simple Random Sampling (SRS) technique. It was found that students' antisocial behaviour had a significant relationship with the antisocial behaviour of secondary schools students in the state and that the best predictor of this antisocial problem of the secondary school students was a frequent display of such antisocial attitudes.

Oyinloye [7] carried out a study on "perception of children's maltreatment on children's learning abilities in Kogi State teaching and learning outcome". The population of the study was primary schools in all 16 local government areas. The sample for the study was 200 primary school pupils which were selected through random sampling techniques. Descriptive research was used to elicit information from 200 pupils through a 26 items questionnaire. Data collected and analysed showed that there is a significant difference between the perception of childhood maltreatment on students' learning abilities in Kogi State and learning outcome. The study concluded that pupils who were perpetually maltreated by their parents and guardians showed a nonchalant attitude; are depressed, frustrated and also seat in the class with a broken focus and lack of concentration.

Olaleye [8] investigated the effects of child enslavement on their social behaviour in relation to students' academic achievement in secondary schools in Osun State, Nigeria. A population of 1600 Senior Secondary (SS) III students from rural and Urban schools were used. The findings showed a significant influence on their social behaviour in the school in the areas of loneliness, inferiority complex and low self-esteem.

Another study by Udoh and Joseph [9] examine how a form of domestic enslavement may impact on the behavioural development of children. The authors examined the behavioural problems of street hawking children in Uyo metropolis. Data collected from a sample of 200 students revealed that children involved in street hawking at the bidding of their parents and guardians come to develop maladjusted patterns of behaviour which in turn impairs their social, moral, psychological and physical development. The authors argued that although domestic work is a useful form of industry training, especially in the context of the Nigerian economic realities, it should be carefully

delineated from domestic enslavement in the interest of the welfare of the child.

A comparative study was carried out by Etim [10] on the prevalence of adolescents' verbal abuse on teachers both in private and public secondary schools in Eket educational zone. In his survey, he gave out 400 questionnaires of which 380 responses were obtained. 378 strongly agreed that students from public schools abuse their teachers more than their counterpart in private secondary schools. Etim [10] points out that the abuse of the teachers by their students is a cankerworm that is eating up the moral social behaviour of the students. Also, Akpan [11] opines that students' involvements in telling lies remain the debauchery that is working on students' social behaviour in some selected private and public secondary schools in Uyo. Akpan also points out that the causes of students telling lies are poor parental upbringing and fear of discipline.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Design of the Study

This study employed the ex-post facto survey design.

2.2 Population and Sample

The Population of the study comprised all the 5, 605 senior secondary school students in Aba education Zone during the period of this study. The multi-stage random sampling procedure was used to select 1400 adolescents, which is 25% of the population, for the study.

2.3 Instrumentation

The instrument used in data collection was the researcher-made Domestic Abuse and Antisocial Behaviour Questionnaire (DAABQ). Scoring of the instrument was done on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points), and Strongly Disagree (1 point). The instrument had a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .862.

2.4 Method of Data Analysis

Independent t-test was used to analyse data for hypotheses testing. The independent variables were used as the grouping variable and the

grouping was done based on the students' scores on each variable.

3. RESULTS

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of parents' physical maltreatment of children on antisocial behaviour among secondary school students.

From the analysis presented in Table 1, it would be observed that the p-value is less than the alpha value at 1398 degrees of freedom. Based on this result, Hypothesis 1 which postulated that there is no significant influence of parents' physical maltreatment of children on antisocial behaviour among secondary school students was rejected. This shows that parents' physically maltreating their children have a significant influence on antisocial behaviour among secondary school students. Arguably, children who frequently get physically maltreated may develop violent behavioural dispositions and resort to physically maltreating others whom they can overpower. Whatever path receiving physical maltreatment leads to manifesting antisocial behaviour notwithstanding, the current analysis shows that the difference between the antisocial behaviour mean score of students who reported more parental physical maltreatment (36.89) and the antisocial behaviour mean score of student who reported low parental physical maltreatment (29.20) provides significant evidence to conclude that

parents' physical maltreatment of children influences antisocial behaviour by contributing to its incidence.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant influence of domestic enslavement of children on antisocial behaviour among secondary school students.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to test Hypothesis 2 which postulated that: There is no significant influence of domestic enslavement of children on antisocial behaviour among secondary school students. The independent samples test presented in Table 2 showed that there was a significant influence of domestic enslavement of children on antisocial behaviour (M1=35.81, M2=29.12; SD1=8.954, SD2=9.024); conditions: $t(1398) = 7.804$, $p = 0.000$, $\alpha = .05$. Hence, Hypothesis 2 was rejected. This analysis therefore gives significant evidence to conclude that domestic enslavement contributes to antisocial behaviour among secondary school students.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant influence of parents' verbal abuse on children on antisocial behaviour among secondary school students.

The independent samples test presented in Table 3 showed that there was a significant influence of verbal abuse of children on antisocial behaviour (M1=38.93, M2=27.04; SD1=8.762, SD2=7.452); conditions: $t(1398) = 23.88$,

Table 1. t-test analysis of physical maltreatment and antisocial behaviour

Dependent variable	Physical maltreatment	N	\bar{x}	SD	t-calc.	df	p-value
Antisocial behaviour	High	90	36.89	9.491	7.825	1398	.000*
	Low	1310	29.20	8.984			

*Significant at $p \leq .05$; t-critical = 1.96

Table 1. t-test analysis of domestic enslavement and antisocial behaviour

Dependent variable	Domestic enslavement	N	\bar{x}	SD	t-calc.	df	p-value
Antisocial behaviour	High	121	35.81	8.954	7.804	1398	.000*
	Low	1279	29.12	9.024			

*Significant at $p \leq .05$; t-critical = 1.96

Table 2. t-test analysis of verbal abuse and antisocial behaviour

Dependent variable	Verbal abuse	N	\bar{x}	SD	t-calc.	df	p-value
Antisocial behaviour	High	313	38.93	8.762	23.883	1398	.000*
	Low	1087	27.04	7.452			

*Significant at $p \leq .05$; t-critical = 1.96

$p = 0.000$, $\alpha = .05$. Hence, Hypothesis 3 which postulated that there is no significant influence of parents' verbal abuse on children on antisocial behaviour among secondary school students was rejected. This analysis gives significant evidence to conclude that demeaning comments by parents and parents' use of abusive words on children contribute to antisocial behaviour among secondary school students. These students may copy the use of abusive language from their parents and use same at school on their peers and this may often result in violent outbursts and fracas among these students, besides other antisocial behaviours.

4. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

This study revealed that students who reported high levels of physical maltreatment from parents also manifested more antisocial behaviour. On the other hand, students who reported lesser physical maltreatment from parents manifested lesser degrees of antisocial behaviour. Independent samples t-test of the related hypothesis gave significant evidence to determine that physical maltreatment from parents has a negative influence on children's behaviour resulting in antisocial behaviour among these students. This finding is similar to that reported by Udoh and Joseph [9], who found that persistent abuse of children at home has a negative influence on the child's attitudes at school and the relationships with other students. Understandably, physical maltreatment may cause the child to develop aggressive behavioural disposition and another rude behaviours that reflect the abuse situation at home. In other instances, physical maltreatment may leave the child generally inhibited and depressed leading to mischievous conduct as outlets of the frustrations and sadness experienced at home. This understanding is in concert with that provided by the survey of Oyinloye [7] who observed nonchalant dispositions, depression, frustration, and loss of concentration during lessons in a population of children who experienced physical maltreatment at home. Hence, the problem of physically maltreating children deserves timely intervention in order for the children to benefit fully from the developmental aims of general education.

Results obtained from this study showed that domestic enslavement contributed to the increase of antisocial behaviour among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone. This contribution was found to be

significant from the test of Hypothesis 2. This finding is similar to those from Olaleye [8] who found that domestic enslavement resulted in loneliness, inferiority complex, and low self-esteem among other social behavioural problems. Understandably, when children are subdued at home and reduced to slaves, the atmosphere does not allow them the freedom to develop socially. These children may then come to manifest various antisocial behaviours ranging from social withdrawal symptoms to severe depressive episodes and outright delinquencies. This explains why Udoh and Joseph [9] maintained that such forms of domestic enslavement as street hawking should not be confused with industry training. Like the findings of Olaleye [8]; Udoh and Joseph [9], this study shows that overall, domestic enslavement contributes to the prevalence of antisocial behaviour among secondary school students and so, the problem of domestic enslavement needs to be addressed if these students are to derive maximum benefit from their education.

Data collected and analysed in this study revealed that parents' verbal abuse on children has a negative influence on the social behaviour of the students, contributing to the increase of antisocial behaviour among secondary school students. It may be inferred that children who are verbally abused at home, whose parents call them demeaning names and rain abuses on them frequently may be emotionally affected negatively. This in agreement with similar findings obtained by Effiong and Ekere [12] who found that verbal abuse exerted strong emotional effects on the children, resulting in the development of poor social skills and verbally abusive adolescents. In concert with previous studies, this study shows that verbal abuse by parents contributes to the increase in antisocial behaviour among secondary school students.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings from this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Students who were physically maltreated at home were more prone to manifesting antisocial behaviour. These students learn aggressive behaviour from parents and transfer this learned behaviour to other social settings including the school where they physically maltreat lowly classmates and schoolmates.

2. Domestic enslavement induces sadness, social and emotional inhibition, and inferiority complex which often have antisocial implications.
3. Parents' verbal abuse of children inculcated in these students the tendency to use abusive words on peers and their seniors at the school. This often leads to incessant cases of the fracas at school among students.
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5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the educational and developmental implications of the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

1. Educational psychologists should work closely with school counsellors and teachers to identify students who are victims of domestic abuse and assist them to overcome the abuse and adjust sufficiently in order to benefit from their secondary school education.
2. Educational psychologists may also lead outreach programmes to sensitize parents and the general public in the long-term effects of the various forms of abuse to which children are exposed.
3. Educational psychologists should carefully research on the subject of domestic abuse and its direct and indirect impact on learning and social adjustment.
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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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ANNEXURE 1: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Domestic Abuse and Antisocial Behaviour Questionnaire

Section A: Personal data

Instruction: Please indicate by a tick (√) any option that best describes your person or school:

- 1) Please indicate your sex
 - (a) Male []
 - (b) Female []

- 2) To which of these age brackets do you belong?
 - (a) Less than 15 []
 - (b) 15 – 16 []
 - (c) 16 – 18 []
 - (d) 18 – 20 []

- 3) Your class level
 - (a) SS 1 []
 - (b) SS 2 []
 - (c) SS 3 []

Section B:

Consider any information you will need to make appropriate decisions about domestic abuse. Tick (√) against each item as it represents your view using the following keys.

Strongly agree SA
 Agree A
 Disagree D
 Strongly dis-agree SD

Parental physical maltreatment

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1.	My parents don't usually beat me when I do wrong				
2.	I don't always deserve the punishment I get from my parents				
3.	My parents always maltreat me even when I am not wrong				
4.	I am given hard work to do at home				
5.	I am not allowed to eat unless I finish my chores				
6.	My parents beat me for every little thing I do				

Domestic enslavement of children

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1.	My parents give me very hard jobs				
2.	I am forced to do the entire clean up everyday				
3.	I am always forced to use heavy buckets to fetch water				
4.	I am not always given money for transport when sent on errands				
5.	Household tasks do not give me enough time for my academic work				
6.	I am always allowed to rest when I am tired of working at home				
7.	I am always assisted with domestic work when I am tired				

Parents' demeaning comments on children

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1.	My parents call me bad names				
2.	My parents like cursing me whenever I offend them				
3.	My parents like to embarrass me in the public				
4.	My parents don't like using bad words on me				

Antisocial behaviour

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	I like beating anyone that looks for my trouble				
2	I prefer using objects to fight with people bigger than me				
3	I hate when teachers give me many rules to obey				
4	I find a way to hurt anyone who gets me angry				
5	When I spoil other people's things I feel happy				
6	I always fight anybody who tries to punish me				
7	I have a nick name for my teacher				
8	I enjoy making noise in classes				
9	I don't like obeying all my teachers' and parents' instruction				
10	I can use weapon on any teacher who insult me in the class				
11	I sometimes cheat to pass in exams				
12	I am not always able to get to school early because I like watching street movies				
13	I hide people's property, because I enjoy to see them look for it				
14	I easily tell lies against other people				
15	I feel happy when I'm able to take my mates' pen and books without their knowledge				

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