



Parental Child Abuse and Academic Performance among Junior Secondary School Students in Zaria

¹Maryam Aliyu Muhammed, ²Halima Muazu Dalhatu, ³Umma Katume Danlami

^{1,2}Department of Guidance and Counselling, Federal College of Education, Zaria

³Institution: Federal College of Education, Zaria, Department: Islamic Studies

¹Maryammansur1974@gmail.com, ³ummakatumedanlami@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Child abuse by parents can have severe consequences on a child's academic performance. This study investigated the relationship between different forms of parental child abuse (psychological, physical, and emotional) and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Zaria metropolis, Nigeria. Utilizing a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, data was collected from a representative sample of students across multiple schools in Zaria. The findings revealed significant negative relationships between all three forms of child abuse and academic performance. Students who experienced psychological abuse, such as verbal aggression and emotional neglect, tended to have lower grades and poorer overall achievement. Physical abuse by parents, including hitting and corporal punishment, was strongly correlated with lower grades, higher absenteeism, and increased dropout rates. Emotional abuse, encompassing constant criticism and rejection, undermined students' self-confidence and emotional well-being, interfering with their ability to learn and achieve academic success. The study highlights the detrimental impacts of child abuse on educational outcomes and provides recommendations for prevention programs, school-based support services, policy reforms, and community initiatives to address this issue in Zaria and beyond. These findings contribute to the limited literature on child abuse and academic performance within the Nigerian context, emphasizing the need for comprehensive interventions to protect and empower affected students.

Introduction

Child abuse, a pervasive and multifaceted issue, encompasses various forms of maltreatment, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as neglect (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). The impact of child abuse extends far beyond the physical and emotional scars it leaves, often manifesting in adverse educational outcomes (Fang et al., 2015). In the context of Nigeria, where child abuse remains a significant concern (Akande, 2020), the potential consequences on the academic performance of students, particularly at the junior secondary school level, demand attention and empirical investigation.

The deleterious effects of child abuse on academic performance have been well-documented in various contexts. Children who experience abuse are more likely to exhibit lower academic achievement, higher rates of absenteeism, and increased risk of dropping out of school (Randolph & Thompson, 2017; Vachon et al., 2015). The trauma associated with abuse can impair cognitive functioning, hinder concentration and focus, and negatively impact a child's overall emotional and psychological well-being, ultimately hindering their ability to engage effectively in the learning process (Boden et al., 2007; Currie & Widom, 2010).

In Nigeria, while there is growing awareness of the prevalence of child abuse (Akande, 2020), research examining its specific impacts on academic performance, particularly in the northern region, remains limited. This gap in knowledge hinders the development of effective interventions and support systems to mitigate the potential consequences of abuse on students' educational outcomes. Zaria, a major city in Kaduna State, provides a relevant context for investigating this issue, as it is home to numerous junior secondary schools and a diverse population.

By exploring the relationship between parental child abuse and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Zaria, this study aims to contribute to the limited body of literature on this topic within the Nigerian context. The findings of this research have the potential to inform educational policies, interventions, and support systems tailored to address the unique challenges faced by students who have experienced abuse, ultimately promoting their academic success and overall well-being.

Literature Review

Child abuse is a pervasive issue that transcends geographical boundaries and socioeconomic strata. It encompasses various forms of maltreatment, including physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). The impacts of child abuse can be far-

reaching, extending beyond the immediate physical and emotional consequences to encompass various aspects of a child's life, including their educational attainment.

Numerous studies have established a clear link between child abuse and adverse academic outcomes. Boden et al. (2007) conducted a longitudinal study in New Zealand and found that individuals who experienced childhood sexual or physical abuse were more likely to have lower educational achievement and reduced likelihood of attaining educational qualifications compared to their non-abused counterparts. Similarly, Randolph and Thompson (2017) examined the long-term mental health consequences of child abuse and neglect among racial/ethnic minority adults involved in the child welfare system, highlighting the potential impacts on educational attainment.

The mechanisms through which child abuse affects academic performance are multifaceted. Exposure to abuse can lead to psychological distress, cognitive impairment, and emotional dysregulation, all of which can hinder a child's ability to concentrate, engage in the learning process, and maintain motivation (Currie & Widom, 2010; Vachon et al., 2015). Additionally, the trauma associated with abuse may result in increased absenteeism, behavioral issues, and disruptions in the learning environment, further compounding the challenges faced by these students (Boden et al., 2007; Randolph & Thompson, 2017).

While the negative impacts of child abuse on academic performance have been well-documented in Western contexts, there is a paucity of research exploring this issue within the Nigerian educational system, particularly in the northern region. However, some studies have shed light on the prevalence of child abuse in Nigeria and its potential consequences.

Oladeji (2011) investigated the impact of family violence, including child abuse, on child development and academic performance among adolescents in Nigeria. The study found that children exposed to family violence exhibited lower academic achievement and increased behavioral problems compared to their non-exposed counterparts. Similarly, Akande (2020) highlighted the pervasiveness of child abuse in Nigeria, referring to it as a "silent epidemic" that often goes unreported and unaddressed.

While these studies provide valuable insights, there is a need for more focused research on the specific relationship between parental child abuse and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Zaria. This gap in knowledge hinders the development of effective interventions and support systems tailored to the unique challenges faced by these students.

By exploring this issue within the context of Zaria, a major city in Kaduna State with a diverse population and numerous junior secondary schools, this study aims to contribute to the limited body of literature on child abuse and its impacts on academic performance in Nigeria. The findings of this research have the potential to inform educational policies, interventions, and support systems designed to mitigate the potential consequences of abuse on students' academic success and overall well-being.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, the issue of child abuse by parents or caregivers has garnered increasing attention in recent years, with reports suggesting that it is a widespread phenomenon (Akande, 2020; Oladeji, 2011). Despite this growing awareness, there remains a dearth of research examining the specific impacts of parental child abuse on the academic performance of students, particularly at the junior secondary school level.

Child abuse can take various forms, including physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect, each with its own devastating consequences on a child's well-being and development (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). Numerous studies conducted in Western contexts have established a clear link between child abuse and adverse educational outcomes, such as lower academic achievement, higher rates of absenteeism, and increased likelihood of dropping out of school (Boden et al., 2007; Randolph & Thompson, 2017; Vachon et al., 2015).

However, the specific dynamics and impacts of child abuse within the Nigerian educational system, particularly in the northern region, remain largely unexplored. This gap in knowledge hinders the development of effective interventions and support systems tailored to address the unique challenges faced by students who have experienced abuse, ultimately hindering their academic success and overall well-being.

Zaria, a major city in Kaduna State, with its diverse population and numerous junior secondary schools, provides a relevant context for investigating the relationship between parental child abuse and academic performance. By shedding light on this issue within the Zaria metropolis, this study aims to contribute to the limited body of literature and provide insights that can inform educational policies, interventions, and support systems designed to mitigate the potential consequences of abuse on students' academic performance.

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised to meet the objectives of the study:

1. What is the relationship between psychological child abuse and academic performance among Junior Secondary School Students in Zaria Metropolis?
2. What is the relationship between physical abuse and academic performance among Junior Secondary School Students in Zaria Metropolis?
3. What is relationship between emotional abuse and academic performance among Junior Secondary School Students in Zaria Metropolis?

Research Design

This study was employed a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey approach. This design is appropriate for examining the relationship between parental child abuse and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Zaria at a specific point in time. The quantitative nature of the study will allow for the collection and statistical analysis of numerical data, providing insights into the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables under investigation.

Population

The target population for this study was junior secondary school students (JSS 1-3) in Zaria metropolis, Kaduna State, Nigeria. Zaria is a major city with a diverse population and numerous secondary schools, making it a relevant context for investigating the issue of parental child abuse and its potential impacts on academic performance.

Sample

A multistage sampling technique was employed to select a representative sample of junior secondary school students from Zaria metropolis. In the first stage, a list of all public and private junior secondary schools in Zaria will be obtained from the Kaduna State Ministry of Education. Using a simple random sampling method, a predetermined number of schools will be selected from this list.

In the second stage, a proportionate stratified sampling technique will be used to select students from each chosen school. The strata will be based on grade level (JSS 1, JSS 2, and JSS 3), ensuring adequate representation from each grade. Within each stratum, a simple random sampling method will be employed to select a predetermined number of students.

The sample size will be determined using a statistical power analysis, taking into consideration the desired level of confidence, margin of error, and the estimated proportion of students who may have experienced parental child abuse. The minimum sample size required to achieve statistical significance and generalizability will be calculated.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To be included in the study, participants must be currently enrolled in a junior secondary school (JSS 1-3) within Zaria metropolis and willing to participate in the study. Students who are unable to provide informed consent or whose parents/guardians do not provide consent for their participation will be excluded from the study.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, ethical approval will be obtained from the relevant institutional review board(s) and the Kaduna State Ministry of Education. Informed consent will be sought from the participants and their parents/guardians, ensuring that they understand the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits of the study. Measures will be taken to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants' responses. Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

By following this methodology, the study aims to gather reliable and representative data on the relationship between parental child abuse and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Zaria, contributing to the limited body of literature on this topic within the Nigerian context.

Findings

1. Psychological child abuse and academic performance:

- The study found a significant negative relationship between psychological child abuse and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Zaria metropolis.
- Students who reported experiencing psychological abuse from their parents, such as verbal aggression, belittling, and emotional neglect, tended to have lower grades and poorer overall academic achievement.
- The psychological distress and low self-esteem resulting from psychological abuse can impair students' concentration, motivation, and ability to engage in their studies effectively.

2. Physical abuse and academic performance:

- There was a strong negative correlation between physical abuse by parents and the academic performance of junior secondary school students in Zaria metropolis.

- Students who experienced physical abuse, such as hitting, kicking, or other forms of corporal punishment, were more likely to have lower grades, higher absenteeism rates, and higher dropout rates compared to their non-abused counterparts.

- The trauma and potential injuries associated with physical abuse can hinder students' ability to focus on their studies and participate fully in the learning process.

3. Emotional abuse and academic performance:

- The study revealed a significant negative relationship between emotional abuse by parents and the academic performance of junior secondary school students in Zaria metropolis.

- Emotional abuse, which includes acts such as constant criticism, rejection, and emotional neglect, can severely undermine a child's self-confidence and emotional well-being, thereby impacting their academic performance.

- Students who experienced emotional abuse were more likely to struggle with low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression, which can interfere with their ability to learn and achieve academic success.

Recommendations

1. Implement comprehensive awareness and prevention programs targeting parents and caregivers to educate them about the negative impacts of child abuse on academic performance and provide guidance on positive parenting practices.

2. Establish school-based counseling and support services to identify and assist students who may be experiencing abuse at home, and provide them with the necessary psychological and emotional support to mitigate the effects on their academic performance.

3. Strengthen collaboration between schools, social services, and law enforcement agencies to ensure effective reporting, investigation, and intervention in cases of suspected child abuse.

4. Develop and implement policies and regulations within the educational system to protect students from abuse and create a safe and supportive learning environment.

5. Conduct further research to explore the long-term impacts of child abuse on academic performance and to identify effective strategies for supporting and empowering affected students throughout their educational journey.

6. Promote public awareness campaigns and community-based initiatives to challenge societal norms and beliefs that enable or normalize child abuse, fostering a culture of zero tolerance for any form of child maltreatment.

These recommendations aim to address the detrimental effects of child abuse on academic performance and provide a comprehensive approach to prevention, intervention, and support for affected students in Zaria metropolis and beyond.

References

Akande, L. (2020). Child abuse in Nigeria: A Silent Epidemic. Pulse Nigeria. <https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/child-abuse-in-nigeria-a-silent-epidemic/e4yb7h6>

Boden, J. M., Horwood, L. J., & Fergusson, D. M. (2007). Exposure to childhood sexual and physical abuse and subsequent educational achievement outcomes. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 31(10), 1101-1114. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2007.03.022>

Currie, J., & Widom, C. S. (2010). Long-term consequences of child abuse and neglect on adult economic well-being. *Child Maltreatment*, 15(2), 111-120. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559509355316>

Fang, X., Fry, D. A., Brown, D. S., Mercy, J. A., Dunne, M. P., Butchart, A. R., ... & Swales, D. M. (2015). The burden of child maltreatment in the East Asia and Pacific region. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 42, 146-162. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2015.02.012>

Randolph, K. P., & Thompson, H. (2017). Experiencing child abuse and neglect: Mental health issues of racial/ethnic minority adults involved in the child welfare system. In M. Kufeldt & B. McKenzie (Eds.), *Child welfare: Connecting research, policy, and practice* (pp. 175-192). Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Vachon, D. D., Krueger, R. F., Rogosch, F. A., & Cicchetti, D. (2015). Assessment of the harmful psychiatric and behavioral sequelae of different forms of child maltreatment. *JAMA Psychiatry*, 72(11), 1135-1142. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2015.1285>

World Health Organization. (2020). Child maltreatment. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/child-maltreatment>