

# The Worse Sides of Family Violence and Its Effects on the Educational Development of Children in Delta State – Nigeria

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Received: 27.08.2019

Accepted: 07.09.2019

Published: 22.09.2019

**Abstract:** Family violence is a daily reality for millions of families around the world including Nigeria, affecting Nigerian children of all ages, all social contexts and in every part of their lives — their homes and families, schools, institutions, and communities. Family violence is a health, legal, economic, educational, developmental, and, above all, a human rights issue. The paper, therefore, focuses on family violence as one of the most prevalent yet relatively hidden and ignored forms of violence globally. The paper looks at the meaning of family violence, forms of family violence, its impact on the education of the Delta State children of Nigeria and strategies for preventing family violence. It also recommends the need for coordinated and integrated efforts among scholars in educating Nigerians on the deadly effect of family violence on educational development of the Delta State children of Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Family violence, educational, developmental, institution, legal, economic and substance abuse.

## INTRODUCTION

One negative aspect of family's life is the effect of family violence on children, either as witness to, or victims of the conflict. Children could be severely traumatized by witnessing family violence otherwise known as domestic violence or themselves being victims of this violence [1]. Children are often in great danger in the place here they should be safest: within their families. For many, 'home' is where they face a regime of terror and violence at the hands of somebody close to them — somebody they should be able to trust. Those victimized suffer physically and psychologically. They are unable to make their own decisions, voice their own opinions or protect themselves for fear of further repercussions. Their human rights are denied and their lives are stolen from them by the ever-present threat of violence.

Violence in society is rooted in the family as a basic unit of society. It is now a conclusive fact that the family plays the most crucial role in child and family violence in Nigeria [2]. It is within the family circle that individual child learns first before moving to the formal education to acquire more Knowledge. Life at the human level starts within the family. Family violence is

one of tools of developmental setbacks to education of Nigerian children and women and children have been the worst hit. Every Nigerian born into family where such child is supposed to be care for, nourished, stimulated, socialized and sent to school in preparation for meaningful living in the society. However, due to the family violence, the quality care, good nutrition and stimulation needed for the child's healthy growth educational development, most especially at the childhood stage readily achieved [3]. The outlook described above, is ne and the future of Nigerian child gloom because family full of will never provide conducive environment which can promote early stimulation to learning in the Nigerian child. It is in the light of the above paper set out to examine the impacts of family violence on the educational development of Nigerian child.

## What is Family Violence?

UNICEF [4] defined family violence as violence perpetrated by intimate partners and other family members, and manifested through: Physical abuse

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DOI : 10.36344/ccjihss.2019.v05i09.002

Such as slapping, beating, arm twisting, stabbing, strangling, burning, choking, kicking, threats with an object or weapon, and murder: It also includes traditional practices harmful to women such as female genital mutilation and wife inheritance (the practice of passing a widow, and her property, to her dead husband's brother). Sexual abuse such as coerced sex through threats, intimidation or physical force, forcing unwanted sexual acts or forcing sex with others. Psychological abuse which includes behaviour that is intended to intimidate and persecute, and takes the form of threats of abandonment or abuse, confinement to the home, surveillance, threats to take away custody of the children, destruction of objects, isolation, verbal aggression and constant humiliation. Economic abuse includes acts such as the denial of funds, refusal to contribute financially, denial of food and basic needs, and controlling access to health care, employment, etc.

Family violence is also described as physically or emotionally harmful acts between individuals in families or in intimate relationships. The term family violence covers a wide range of behaviors and includes domestic violence (sometimes referred to as spouse abuse), child abuse, and abuse of the elderly. Violence between adult partners can include threats and coercion, physical and sexual assault, and murder. Child abuse ranges from physical or sexual assault to neglect of a child's basic needs. Violence toward elderly involves physical, psychological, or financial abuse or neglect [5]. According to Gelles [6] domestic violence or spouse abuse is physically or emotionally harmful acts between husbands and wives or between other individuals in intimate relationships. It includes emotional or verbal abuse, denial of access to resources or money, restraint of normal activities or freedom (including isolation from friends and family), sexual coercion or assault, threats to kill or to harm, and physical intimidation or attacks. Child abuse is intentional acts that result in physical or emotional harm to children. The term child abuse covers a wide range of behavior, actual physical assault by parents or other adult caretakers to neglect of a child's basic needs. Adegoke and Cladeji [7] opined that information on the amount of violence shows that it is not rare phenomenon. Family violence, of course, represents a rather extreme example of the failure of supportiveness, it is found in every kind of family and it can reach extreme levels.

### What Constitutes Family Violence?

Family violence of course, is the major basis of child violence. Family violence takes a number of forms: physical and psychological and occurs not between spouses but across members of unhealthy families. According to Egwu [2] the most common examples of family violence are the following:

1. Wife battering
2. Physical abuse of children (Physical Violence)

3. Child neglect and rejection (Emotional Violence)
4. Child victims of sexual abuse
5. Family homicide cases
6. Elder abuse
7. Marital rape
8. Incest
9. Alcohol, alcoholism, drug and family violence
10. General parental irresponsibility, such as family abandonment by husbands.

Where these occur, the family is readily unhealthy thereby jeopardizing the development of the Nigerian child most especially educational development.

Violent children in our educational institutions come from unhealthy, violence homes and families, have parents with criminal and violent history, anti-social personality, lack parental supervision leading to the development of conduct behaviour problems such as juvenile delinquency, experience parental support of the use of aversive and aggressive behaviour and are also victims of divorce or separation [2].

In the main, family violence can be categorized into two: (i) Physical Violence (ii) Emotional Violence.

- I. Physical Violence: This involves the administration of noxious stimuli that are likely to cause bodily harm or bring about lasting damage to children [8]. Family members who lack an understanding of the process of development in children hold unreasonable expectations for the abilities of such children. They wish to ascribe adult qualities and role to very young children and are easily frustrated when their wishes are not met. They do resort to brute force (violence) when everything else fails because they see these children as stubborn, uneducated and morally depraved which is not good for the educational development of the Nigerian child.
- II. Emotional Violence: This also involves the use of stimuli that involve emotional violence is a disservice to the educational development of the Nigerian child as well as educational enterprise. Onete and Imona [9] described emotional violence as any attitude or behaviour which interferes with child's mental health or social development. This includes yelling, screaming, name-calling, shaming, negative comparison to others, telling them they are bad, no good, worthless or mistake'. According to Nwachukwu [8] emotional violence is in different forms viz: (a) use of invidious language and (b) language that has the potential to ridicule someone. He described the first of these forms as the use of language by the family members that is likely to cause resentment, provoke ill will and unintended

behaviour. Expression of preference for particular child, whether in overt or disguised manner have but one consequence, which is that of withdrawal on the part of those that are not the family members' favourite. The long-term effects include loss of self-esteem, the development of negative self-concept and a likely desire to withdraw from the influences that are administered by the family members. In extreme forms, children may develop irreparable dislike for the school and all that it stands for [8].

The second group consists of words and expressions that cause or have the potentials to cause mental, spiritual, and moral pain. Nwachukwu [8] opined that words such as "idiot, I did not expect anything better, teach him/her how to do it, enjoyment officer, latecomer, glutton" lead to belittling, denigrating, ridiculing, scaring, and discrimination against the child. He said that the net effect of this approach is to alienate the child and create the impression that the school is engaged in an undeclared battle with the as well as arousing phobic feelings in the child, leading ultimately abandonment of the school.

### **Family Violence and its Effects on the Education of the Nigerian Child**

Families affected by violence touch all service systems and live in every community. Children exposed to family violence are in our schools and day-care canters. Though, family violence cuts across the economic spectrum, families are more likely to be affected. In fact, many families in which family violence is present, struggle with multiple problems, including arty, substance abuse and exposure to other forms of violence.

According to Imhonde, Aluede and Oboite [10], Adegoke and Oladeji [7], Adeniyi [11], Haggal and Mang [12], Nwachukwu [8], Isangedighi [13], Omoniyi [14] and Arjyan [15] the following are the serious negative and long term effects of family violence on Nigerian child;

1. Development of irreparable dislike for the school and all that it stands for.
2. Late coming to school, high absenteeism
3. Impairment of cognitive development especially in terms of intelligence and intellectual functioning at school.
4. Poor academic performance and low level of problem solving skills.
5. Development of negative self-concept
6. Higher risk for maladjustment both in school and home.
7. Development of behavioural problems such as aggression, phobias, insomnia, low-self esteem, and disobedience, low level of social competence, and tendency toward substance abuse.

8. Development emotional problems such as fear, anxiety, depression, anger, hostility and poor self-esteem.
9. Nightmares and physical health complaints.
10. Replication of parental aggressive and abusive behaviour in schools thus creating a vicious cycle of family violence both in home and educational institutions.
11. Impairment of physical, social, emotional and mental developments.
12. Withdrawal on the part of those that are not the family members' favourite.
13. Sexual abuse which could lead to adolescent premarital pregnancy, contraction of sexually transmitted disease (STD) and the universal scourge known as HIV/AIDS.

Children from violence family bring their baggage of experience straight to classroom. They act out their searing pain in disruptive, annoying and frustrating ways through behaving aggressively, deliberately hurting and annoying others Nigerian children and other dysfunctional behaviours. They all susceptible to above effects and they can prevent Nigerian child from having desired and best education in his or her life.

### **Strategies for Preventing Family Violence**

Preventing family violence can be achieved through the followings:

- Changing the individual's behaviour — through education, lectures, and counselling.
- Changing the environment — providing mentors who furnish positive role models.
- Changing the law — legal requirements for arrest and prosecution of offenders.
- A societal change in the acceptability of family violence [16].

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the light of the serious consequences of family violence especially on Nigerian child, it is therefore recommended that:

- Scholars (Psychologists, Counsellors etc.) in Nigeria should come together to educate and sensitized Nigerians on the deadly effects of family violence especially on the education of the Nigerian child.
- Counseling should be provided to parents and the entire citizenry to evolve good parent-child relations in order to reduce violence in the family.
- As much as possible, parents/caregivers should avoid the use of corporal punishment because it only teaches children that violence is the best way of maintaining control and it encourages them to hit other children.
- Parents should provide a nurturing and supportive child friendly home.

- Free from discrimination, violence and/or abuse of any kind.
- Parents should have sound inter-personal relationship with their children showing them love and affection,
- A child should not be disciplined when the adult's anger is out of control.
- Intense awareness should be created among Nigerian families using seminars, workshops and training programmes about what constitutes family violence.
- There should be penalty for those engaging in family violence against Nigerian child to deter others.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has been able to show that family violence is a problem that should be definitely confronted and condemn totally. Family violence as discussed has serious implications on the educational system in Nigeria. It presents a serious draw back on the Nigerian child educational development and thus hinders societal growth and development. The problem requires adequate and efficient handling in order to improve educational development of Nigerian child. Much need to be done to create awareness and demonstrate that change is not only necessary, it is also possible. Now that strategies for dealing with it are becoming clearer, there is no excuse for inaction.

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