



Physical and Psychological abuses as Correlates of Self-esteem of Junior Secondary School Students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated physical abuse and psychological abuses as correlates of self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, Nigeria. Correlational research design was adopted. Population of the study was 45,005 (19,520 males and 25,485 females) students in all the 45 public junior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State of the 2020/2021 academic session. Sample of the study was 395 students (171 males and 224 females) Basic 9 students in public Junior Secondary Schools (UBE Schools) in Port Harcourt Metropolis which was determined using the Taro Yamane's formula and selected by cluster sampling technique. Questionnaire on Students' Physical and Psychological Abuses and Students' Self-esteem Questionnaire were developed and used for data collection. The face and content validity of the instruments were ascertained by two experts in Guidance and Counselling and Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Foundations, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. With the Cronbach Alpha method, reliability coefficients of 0.76 and 0.78 were obtained for the two clusters of the Questionnaire on Students' Physical and Psychological Abuses, while test-retest method was used to obtain reliability coefficient of 0.80 for the Students' Self-esteem Questionnaire. Results of the study showed that physical abuse and psychological abuse have negative significant relationship with self-esteem of Junior Secondary School students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State as perceived by the respondents. It was recommended that: students should not be subjected to physical abuse to avoid them feeling worthless in the society, and negative names and curses should not be used on students in order not to diminish their self-esteem in the society.

Keywords: Child Abuse, Physical Abuse and Psychological Abuse, Self-esteem

INTRODUCTION

The reaction of an individual, especially an adolescent to certain events or situations is most times dependent on the individual's self-esteem. Self-esteem is the way and manner in which a person sees him/herself, especially as it has to do with his/her ability, and perception towards issues of life. Mackowicz (2018) perceived self-esteem as an attitude towards oneself, especially towards one's capabilities. Bankole and Arowosegbe (2014) viewed self-esteem as the extent to which an individual approves of and accept him and regard himself in comparison with others. According to Ndimele and Eremie (2018), self-esteem have become a household construct which drive the behaviours, decisions and actions of most people, especially the teens in recent times. While individuals with low self-esteem might be prone to shyness, awkwardness, etc, those with high self-esteem can easily express their feelings in any social environment with confidence. It is therefore, imperative for the children or adolescents to be brought up in a manner that would not affect their behaviours, decisions and actions negatively as to enhance their personal sense of ability and work (self-esteem) because they are the future leaders of tomorrow's society.

However, child abuse among other factors could affect an individual's self-esteem and social cognitive development to some extent. Child abuse is an intentional or unintentional act of maltreating a child or children physically, sexually and psychologically as well as neglect to the children's needs by parents or a care givers. Child abuse may include any act or failure to act by a parent or a caregiver that results in actual or potential harm to a child, and can occur in a child's home, or in the organizations, schools or communities the child interacts with (McCoy & Keen, 2013). There are many types or forms of child abuse as exhibited by the parents or caregivers in various communities and cities of the world including Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, Nigeria. They include physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, neglect abuse (Bankole & Arowosegbe, 2014), emotional maltreatment, witnessing domestic violence. In the society today, child abuse seems to have become rampant. Sidebotham (2011) revealed that 1.8million children are involved in pornography and prostitution and that over 1.2 million children have been trafficked. Nigeria as a country and Rivers State in particular cannot be said to be free from the social problems and effect of child abuse as it has to do with the children's self-esteem. This study examined how physical and psychological abuses can relate to self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, Nigeria.

Physical abuse is any action taken by a parent, caregiver or older person on a child or younger one which is capable of causing him/her bodily pain or injury. Marshuk and Salu (2013) noted that physical abuse is characterized by physical injury, such as bruises and fractures that result from punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabling, choking, hitting with a hard stick, strap or other object and burning. Physical abuse can affect the normal growth and sense of belonging of some children in a way that could make them to feel rejected by the adults within the environment. Ajake, Ihejiamaizu and Oba (2014) opined that many children and adults who were physically abused early in life simply accept the blame and think that they are the problems and are crazy, bad and worthless, hence they discredit their own reactions and feelings so that their perceptions match what they think or feel. They reiterated further that physically, a battered child can be permanently deformed due to injuries sustained in the form of cuts, bruises, burns or broken or fractured bones, which in turn lowers their self-esteem. In corroboration, Tenevelli (2012) asserted that a child who is physically abused may likely develop a low self-esteem. Famularo, Kinscherff and Fenton (2012) observed that physical abuse adds significantly to other risks factors in accounting for lifetime diagnoses of major depression, dysthymia, conduct disorder including low self-esteem. This shows that child physical abuse, no matter its form, could be detrimental to the self-esteem of the victim.

Another critical abuse is psychological abuse, which is also known or interchangeably used as emotional abuse. Psychological abuse is the failure of a parent or caregiver to provide supportive environment that can enhance the emotional well-being and development of a child, such as nicknaming and restricting a child's movement. Psychological abuse is all about attempt and actions which geared towards harming children physiologically. Kail and Cavanaugh (2017) viewed emotional or psychological abuse as infliction of anguish, pain or distress. According to the National Clearing-House on Child-Abuse and Neglect Information (2006), emotional abuse is acts or omissions by parents or other caregivers that have caused or could cause serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional or mental disorders. Examples include threats, name calling, belittling, shaming the child in front of other unrealistic expectations like locking the child in the dark (Messer, 2011).

Psychological abuse results to children being shy, nervous, anxious, unsure of themselves, lacking self confidence and self-esteem while others are developmentally and educationally retarded and even present severe behavioral and emotional problems which may include destructiveness, self-harming behavior, fire setting, bed-wetting and running away from home, etc. (Fritz, 2011). It has also been observed that psychological maltreatment is related to serious problems in a children peer relationship and self-esteem (Egeland et al., 2010). Bankole and Arowosegbe (2014) noted that psychological abuse has influence on self-esteem, and this finding according to them implies that developmental theory support that child psychological abuse affects his or her self-esteem. Mwakanyamale and Yizhen (2019) reiterated that childhood psychological maltreatment is prevalent in the society and is associated with psychological distress and low self-esteem during adolescence. It is imperative to carry out this study as to ascertain the

relationship that exists between physical and psychological abuses and self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The issue of child abuse seems to have become one of the major social issues that could pose serious danger on children and adolescents' self-evaluation and feeling about self if not properly checked. To eradicate child abuse, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child was established to care and protect the rights of children and young people, and to prevent them from abuse in society in which they live (Messer, 2011). In Rivers State of Nigeria, there is free education for all children to ensure that no child is engaged in street trading. These notwithstanding, the incidence of child abuse in our society today seems to have become apparent endless and this hurts the self-esteem of the victim (s), as well as the image of the state. Unfortunately, not much empirical studies have been carried out on the relationship between child abuse and self-esteem of students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, Nigeria, hence the need for this study.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to determine the relationship between physical and psychological abuses and self-esteem of Junior Secondary School students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. The objectives of the study were to:

1. Ascertain the relationship between physical abuse and self-esteem of Junior Secondary School students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.
2. Examine the relationship between psychological abuse and self-esteem of Junior Secondary School students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between physical abuse and self-esteem of Junior Secondary School students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State?
2. What relationship exists between psychological abuse and self-esteem of Junior Secondary School students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between physical abuse and self-esteem of Junior Secondary School students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between psychological abuse and self-esteem of Junior Secondary School students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.

RESEARCH METHODS

Design of the Study

The study adopted the correlational research design. Okwo and Walson (2016) defined correlational research design as the research design that provides clues for the proper understanding of patterns of relationships among variables of the study. Correlational research design was considered as the most appropriate design for the study because it would enable the researcher to investigate the relationship that exists between the independent variables (physical abuse and psychological abuse) and the dependent variable (self-esteem of Junior Secondary School students) in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, Nigeria without the researcher manipulating the variables.

Population of the Study

The population of the study was 45,005 students (19,520 males and 25,485 females) in all the 45 public Junior Secondary Schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State for the 2020/2021 academic session (Planning, Research and Statistics, Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board, Port Harcourt, 2021).

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size of the study was 395 Basic 9 students (171 males and 224 females) in the Universal Basic Education Schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. Taro Yamane's sample size formula

was used to determine the sample size, while multi-stage sampling technique was used in selecting the sample of the study. First, the cluster sampling technique was used to group (cluster) the population into Local Government Areas (Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt City) and gender (male and female students). After clustering the population into Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt City Local Government Areas, the simple random sampling technique was used to select 12 UBE schools in Obio/Akpor LGA and 8 UBE schools in Port Harcourt City LGA. The simple random sampling technique was further used to select 264 (109 male and 155 female UBE 9 students) from the 12 randomly selected UBE schools in Obio/Akpor LGA, and 131 (62 male and 69 female UBE 9 students) from the 8 randomly selected UBE schools in Port Harcourt City LGA.

Instrument for Data Collection

Questionnaire on Students' Physical and Psychological Abuses and Students' Self-esteem Questionnaire were developed and used for data collection. The two instruments were prepared on a 4-point scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) with 4 points to Strongly Disagree (SD) with 1 point.

Validation of the Instruments

The face and content validity of the instruments were ascertained by two experts in Guidance and Counselling and Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Foundations, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.

Reliability of the Instruments

Cronbach Alpha method was used to obtain the reliability coefficients of 0.76 and 0.78 for the two clusters of the Questionnaire on Students' Physical and Psychological Abuses, and Test-retest method was used to obtain the reliability coefficient of 0.80 for the Students' Self-esteem Questionnaire.

Methods of Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed and tested with the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (r) analysis and t-distribution method. The research questions were answered using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (r) analysis, while the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using the t-distribution method with the formula below:

$$t = r \sqrt{\frac{N - 2}{1 - r^2}}$$

where, t = t-test transformation, r = correlation coefficient value, N = total number of cases (population) and df = N - 2.

Wonu, Victor-Edema and Ndimele (2021) suggested that t-distribution method should be used to test for the significance of the computed correlation coefficient in the absence of SPSS software irrespective of the sample size of the study since it approximates the z-transformation as the data tends to infinity.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: *What is the relationship between physical abuse and self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State?*

Table 1: Relationship between Physical Abuse and Self-esteem of Junior Secondary School Students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State (n = 389)

Variables	N	\bar{x}	SD	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum XY$	r-value	Remark
				$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$			
Physical Abuse	389	3.01	0.47	1171	3609			
						3710	-0.112	Negative
Self-esteem	389	3.17	0.38	1235	3977			

Source: Field Data, 2021.

Table 1 revealed the relationship that exists between physical abuse and self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. Results in Table 1 showed that the correlation coefficient (r-value) is -0.112 which is negative. Hence it was concluded that there exists a negative relationship between physical abuse and self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. This result implies that physical abuse of adolescent students is capable of making the victims to have low or negative self-esteem. This result is not far from the fact that constant beating and such other actions that results to bodily pain and injury makes most children and young people to feel that they are not valued in the environment.

Research Question 2: *What relationship exists between psychological abuse and self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State?*

Table 2: Relationship between Psychological Abuse and Self-esteem of Junior Secondary School Students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers (n = 389)

Variables	N	\bar{x}	SD	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum XY$	r-value	Remark
				$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$			
Psychological Abuse	389	3.03	0.46	1179	3655			
						3734	-0.134	Negative
Self-esteem	389	3.17	0.38	1235	3977			

Source: Field Data, 2021.

Table 2 revealed the relationship that exists between psychological abuse and self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. Results in Table 2 showed that the value of correlation (r) is -0.134, which indicates that the relationship between psychological abuse and self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State is negative. This implies that psychological abuse affects the self-esteem of secondary school adolescents in a negative direction, that is, it results to low self-esteem among secondary school students. This result is because psychological abuse greatly affects children’s emotional state of mind making them to display feelings of worry and unhappiness about themselves as well as lack self-confidence and self-esteem.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between physical abuse and self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.

Table 3: PPMC and T-distribution Analysis of Relationship between Physical Abuse and Self-esteem of Junior Secondary School Students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State

Variables	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	r	t-distr	t-crit	α	Remark
Physical Abuse	389	3.01	0.47	387	-0.112	-2.190	1.960	0.05	Sig.
Self-esteem	389	3.17	0.38						

Sig. = Significant at 0.05 Significance Level

Results in Table 3 showed that at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom (df) of 387, r-value = -0.112, t-distribution (t-distr) value = -2.190 and t-critical value (t-crit) = 1.960. Since the t-distr value (-2.190) > t-crit value (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom (df) of 387, the null hypothesis that “there is no significant relationship between physical abuse and self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State” was therefore rejected which implies that there is significant relationship between physical abuse and self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. However, with the r-value and t-distr value being negative, it was concluded that there is a negative relationship between physical abuse and self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between psychological abuse and self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.

Table 4: PPMC and T-distribution Analysis of Relationship between Psychological Abuse and Self-esteem of Junior Secondary School Students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State

Variables	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	r	t-trans	t-crit	α	Remark
Psychological Abuse	389	3.03	0.46	387	-0.134	-2.613	1.960	0.05	Sig.
Self-esteem	389	3.17	0.38						

Sig. = Significant at 0.05 Significance Level

From the data in Table 4, it can be observed that at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom (df) = 387, r-value = -0.134, t-distribution (t-distr) value = -2.613 and t-critical value (t-crit) = 1.960. Since at 0.05 level of significance and df = 387, t-distr value of -2.613 > t-crit value of 1.960, the null hypothesis that “there is no significant relationship between psychological abuse and self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State” was therefore rejected implying that there is significant relationship between psychological abuse and self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. With the negative correlation (r) and t-distribution values in Table 4, it was concluded that there is a negative significant relationship between psychological abuse and self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Results of for research quest one and hypothesis one showed that there is a negative relationship between physical abuse and self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, and that there is a negative significant relationship between physical abuse and self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. This result is not far from the fact that constant beating and such other actions that results to bodily pain and injury makes most children and young people to feel that they are not valued in the environment. Exposure of children and adolescents to situations and environments that causes bodily pain or injury to them may likely affect their self-esteem. The finding of this study clearly agreed with Uchenna, Ajake, Chinyere, Ihejiamaizu and Achi (2014) that physically battered children can be permanently deformed due to injuries sustained in the form of cuts, bruises, burns or broken or fractured bones which in turn lowers their self-esteem. To further support the finding of this study, Famularo, Kinscherff and Fenton (2012) revealed that physical abuse is a significant factor to other risks factors in accounting for lifetime diagnoses of major depression, dysthymia, conduct disorder including low self-esteem. This is a clear indication that a child who is always physically abused is likely developing a low self-esteem.

Also, results for research question two and hypothesis two revealed that there is a negative relationship between psychological abuse and self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, and that there is a negative significant relationship between psychological abuse and self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. This result is because psychological abuse greatly affects children's emotional state of mind making them to display feelings of worry and unhappiness about themselves as well as lack self-confidence and self-esteem. In line with this finding, Messer (2011) asserted that emotional abuse affects children in different ways and to varying degrees such as being shy, nervous, anxious, unsure of themselves, lacking self confidence and self-esteem while others are developmentally and educationally retarded and even present severe behavioral and emotional problems which may include destructiveness, self-harming behavior, fire setting, bed-wetting and running away from home etc. However, in contrary to this finding, Arata, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Bowers and O'Brien (2017) observed that there is a strong positive correlation between psychological maltreatment and self-esteem. According to them, the correlation that exists between self-esteem and psychological maltreatment is due to the fact that psychological maltreatment in children can negatively affect the cognitive, social and emotional development of a child. Also, Mwakanyamale and Yizhen (2019) found that there is a strong positive correlation between psychological maltreatment and self-esteem, and a strong positive correlation between psychological distress and self-esteem, and thus concluded that childhood psychological maltreatment is prevalent in the society and is associated with psychological distress and low self-esteem during adolescence.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that physical abuse and psychological abuse are negatively and significantly related to self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. Hence conclusion was drawn that physical abuse and psychological abuse are strong determinant of low self-esteem of junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, Nigeria.

Implications for Counselling

Based on the findings of the study, counselling associations in the Rivers State of Nigeria could from time-to-time organize free community-based guidance and counselling sessions for both children and adolescents on the need to avoid occasions and /or environments that could lead to the physical and psychological abuses of students. Also, there would be the need for posters, radio and television awareness campaigns could be mounted on nature and issues of child abuse and its implications on the child, family and society at large, as well as actions to take as a victim.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Students should not be subjected to physical abuse to avoid them feeling worthless in the society.

2. Negative names and curses should not be used on students in order not to diminish their self-esteem in the society.

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