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The effects of parenting styles on student's disposition to violence in Osun State, Nigeria

Lawani Ajibike OMOLOLA¹

Abstract

The prevalence of violence among youth gives concern not only in our immediate society but universally. The tendency of youth to become violent may have to do with child upbringing, which is embedded in style of parenting. Thus, this study examined the effects of parenting styles on student's disposition to violence. It also investigated the nature and prevalence of violence in selected secondary schools in Osun State. A questionnaire titled "Students Disposition to Violence Scale (SDVS)" was used to collect data from 600 students that participated in the study. Data collected were analyzed using t-test statistic and one-way ANOVA. The study revealed that the nature of violence that occurred in secondary schools is mostly physical and psychological. However, the most prevalent is physical violence where fighting occurred by 71%. It was discovered that parenting styles had a significant effect on the disposition of students to violence ($F=7.643$, $p<0.05$) Conclusively, the study revealed that the pattern of upbringing which parents adopt for their children, are vital factors that contribute to making the child either vulnerable or not, to violent behaviour.

Keywords: violence; parenting styles; nature of violence; disposition to violence; child upbringing; youth.

Introduction

Violence is a behaviour which is unacceptable and totally condemned everywhere around the world. However, it occurs almost everyday and almost everywhere. From personal observations, hardly is there any news review or dailies without a case of violence being mentioned. Going through an on-line news report (All Africa, 2007), where different African countries reported cases

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of crime, it is disheartening to disclose that Nigeria had one of the highest cases of crimes, which are mostly violence related cases such as assassinations, rituals, murder, kidnappings and robbery.

Although violence is viewed by many in different contexts, it is important to note that more often than not, the question of pain remains the core of the subject. The question of pain here is relative, because one persons feeling of pain may be different from another. In other words, there are various levels of pain which accounts for the way some others view violence. Nevertheless, regardless of the definition that anyone would give to violence, it is behaviour as well as an activity that is condemned universally. In the year 2002, World Health Organization (W.H.O) defined violence as the intentional use of physical force or power threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury death or psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation.

This definition promotes a broad explanation of violence. The use of the word 'power' and 'force' suggests a domineering attitude from a perpetrator, this indirectly also suggests an authoritative and equally neglecting attitude from the perpetrator. Furthermore, it recognizes that the outcomes of violence are broader than physical injury or disability, but identifies violence as a psychological and social problem. 'Deprivation' for example suggests denial. It may not be directly related to the health of the victim, but it indicates that something regarded as a right, has been withdrawn.

Violence does not have to be fatal to greatly affect the wellbeing of individuals and communities. Thus, a simple or single act of violence can bring about other related injuries which can leave emotional and physical scars that remain with victims long after the violent event has occurred. In many states in Nigeria, the display of violence is evident, especially within the last decade. In Nigeria, many cases of violence have been reported. For example, ethnic clashes in the south-west, religious clashes in the north, and political clashes generally take place in the nation.

Wilson and Lipsey (2006) reveal that the more common types of aggressive behaviour seen in schools include fighting, name calling, intimidation, verbal conflicts, disruptive behaviour and other negative interpersonal behaviours. Such behaviours tend to inhibit learning and create interpersonal problems for those involved. In Nigerian secondary schools, the case of students threatening and bullying one another, and even their teachers is a common form of violence. An example of this is the case of pupils who beat their teacher to death in the northeastern part of Nigeria (BBC News, 2007).

Parenting styles according to Baumrind (1973) characterized parent interactive styles as authoritarian, permissive democratic or neglecting. It is a concept that has risen from research on child rearing and development. It describes parental

involvement and plays a role in the development of cognitive and social competence. The authoritarian style of parenting is characterized by a dominating attitude rather than a nurturing attitude. Threats, yelling and punishment are the tools of communication. Consequently, it is assumed that children may imbibe such methods of communication which may dispose the child to violent behaviour. There is a common saying that if a child is constantly being beaten for the slightest mistake, the child gets used to beating and in view of this, the probability that the child would beat other children or even fight others is high, perhaps because beating and hitting might not be a big deal to that child anymore.

In the same vein, parents who will almost always reason with the child to point out the good and bad will likely produce a child who will settle issues with a dialogue. On the other hand, parents who nurture their children but do not discipline them well are permissive (LeFebvre, 2004) and lack of sufficient discipline may dispose a child to violent behaviour. LeFebvre's description of positive parenting is the democratic style, where nurture and discipline is high. This case disposes the child to little problem behaviour. The neglecting style is characterized by lack of parental supervision and un-involvement in which the child would probably not be able to boast of appropriate behavioural skills. It is also possible that inadequate parenting skills can contribute to student's development of maladaptive behaviour which can manifest as violence. Thus a child's disposition to violence is the tendency to be violent as a result of parental influence.

According to Centre for International Cooperation and Security (2007), poverty increases violence by causing a sense of desperation. In other words, hunger is a powerful force that can drive a person to violence. This view suggests that the socio-economic status of a family is a likely factor for a child's exposure to violence. This also implies that parents may become a little unfriendly with their children and may also be unstable in their emotions and interactions as a result of poverty and harsh conditions. With this, they pile up grief on their children.

Furthermore, some families who barely have enough to cater for themselves might end up using violence to survive the harsh conditions. This view is parallel with the report of Oyelere (2007), who reported an interview of the police with an armed robber who said poverty, and a struggle to cater for his children led him into armed robbery. He believed that people in desperate ambition to become rich, can do anything, even if it means carrying a gun and taking the lives of innocent people. However, contrary to this view is that of Ogunbameru, (1997); Olukoya, (2004); Popoola and Alao, (2006) who opined that violent youth in form of secret cults actually come from the rich homes and are mainly the children of Nigeria's ruling class who seek a level of control in the manner that their parents control the country.

Ogundare (2007) reported that violence is on the increase in virtually all educational institutions in Nigeria. Cultism, and bullying are now rampant in

schools as well as cases in which students attack fellow students and teachers. These incidents have resulted in reduced school attendance, impaired concentration, fear, a diminished ability to learn and in some cases, it has caused school closures. The consequence of this on national development is critical enough for consideration and research.

Since parents and the entire family setting are a major influence on the child, it is imperative to find out how their styles of parenting dispose a child towards violence, in order to curb or reduce minimally its occurrence (Cojocaru, 2009). Finally, according to WHO (2002), national estimates of physical and sexual assaults in Nigeria are not available, despite its daily occurrence. In view of this, there is a need to investigate the prevalence of violence in schools.

Methodology

This survey entailed the process of gathering information from a representative sample of the population by using an instrument to describe the prevailing events on violence in Osun State, and to make generalization on the prevalence of violence in Nigeria. This method was used, because it provides efficient collection of data over broad populations which can be used to predict actual behaviour.

Five local government areas were selected randomly from thirty local government areas in Osun state, Western Nigeria. One of the local governments was purposively selected because of the recent communal clashes that occurred in the area. Further to this, two secondary schools were randomly selected from each local government area. In each school, fifty students were randomly selected. Therefore, a total of 600 students from 12 selected schools participated in the study.

The research instrument used in this study was a self-developed questionnaire titled "Students' Disposition to Violence Scale (SDVS)". Section "A" consisted of 10 items designed to elicit information on personal data of the respondents. Section "B" consisted of 14 items designed to elicit information on individual and inter-personal violence. Section "C" consisted of 10 items designed to elicit information on the nature and prevalence of violence that occur in secondary schools. Finally, Section "D" consisted of 20 items which were designed to elicit information from students on their parents' pattern of parenting. The class teachers assisted in getting the students to cooperate during the administration of the instrument. The students ticked their responses and the questionnaires were collected immediately after its administration in each school.

The research question was analyzed using simple percentages while the research hypothesis was tested using the one-way ANOVA.

Research Question: What is the nature and prevalence of violence demonstrated among Nigerian secondary school students?

The nature and prevalence of violence among Nigerian Secondary School Students was measured and data collected was analyzed using simple percentages.

Table 1. Nature and prevalence of violence exhibited in secondary schools

Type of Violence	Classification of Violence	Always/ Sometimes positive responses		%	Rarely/Never negative responses		%
Slapping	Physical violence	253	76	56%	113	148	44%
		329			261		
Fighting	Physical violence	272	85	71%	167	64	39%
		357			231		
Bullying	Physical violence	280	64	59%	146	94	41%
		344			240		
Seizing other student's things	Psychological violence	66	123	33%	51	336	67%
		189			387		
Rape	Sexual violence	59	33	16%	43	447	84%
		92			490		
Abusing	Psychological violence	292	60	62%	100	116	38%
		352			216		
Damaging school property	Physical violence	64	76	24%	47	391	76%
		140			438		
Making jest of others	Psychological violence	281	76	62%	118	105	38%
		357			223		
Other forms of violence identified by the respondents							
Rioting	Physical violence	52	55	19%	52	418	81%
		107			470		
Ganging	Physical violence	74	75	26%	49	383	74%
		149			432		

Table 1 presents the nature and prevalence of violence that takes place in Nigerian secondary schools. The table reveals that the level of violence that occurred in schools is mostly inter-personal. It also shows that physical violence was most prevalent in secondary schools where slapping occurred by 56% level of frequency. The frequency of occurrence of fighting is 71% which claimed the highest rate of physical violence. Bullying was another type of violence which occurred by 62% while the rate at which some students seized other student's things was 33%. Rape was not a very common type of violence rarely occurring at a level of just 16%, while abusing occurred at a frequency level of 62%. Furthermore, the rate at which students damaged property was 24%, while the

rate at which students made jest of others occurred at a frequency level of 38%. Finally, rioting and ganging rarely occurred at a frequency level of 19% and 26% respectively.

Research Hypothesis: Parenting styles have no significant effect on the disposition of students to violence.

This hypothesis was tested using one-way ANOVA and four parenting styles were tested in the study. The result is presented in table 2.

Table 2. Analysis of variance of disposition to violence across parenting styles

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F _{calc.}	F _{critical}
Between Groups	1332.73	3	444.24	7.64	2.60
Within Groups	32377.00	557	58.13		
Total	33709.73	560			

From table 2, the F-value is 7.64 and the critical Value is 2.60. At 0.05 level of significance, the F-value is greater than the critical Value, thus the null hypothesis is rejected. From this, we can infer that there is a significant effect of parenting styles on the disposition of students to violence.

Discussion

The research question for this study is based on the nature and prevalence of violence in secondary schools. Results of the study revealed that slapping occurred in schools at a frequency of 56%, fighting occurred at a frequency of 71%, bullying occurred at a frequency of 59%, seizing others things occurred in frequency of 33% while rape occurred by 16%. This means that rape is not commonly heard among secondary school students in Osun State. Even in cases where it does occur, many of the cases might go unreported and remain secret as reported in WHO (2002). However, the frequency of occurrence of fighting revealed that it is a common type of violence. Furthermore, abusing and making jest of others were both reported to occur by 62% level of frequency, while the prevalent rate of damaging school property rarely occurred by only 24%.

From the ongoing, results of the study revealed that fighting; abusing and making jest of others are the most common violent acts. This finding is in agreement with Mooney (1991), who also carried out a study to show that teasing and fighting are common in school life. However, the explanation that can be given for abusing, making fun of others and teasing as common acts of violence, is that students engage in such acts and still do not think they have been violent.

This is because it does not involve physical damage. Conversely, the definition of violence reviewed in literature includes emotional pain as a form of psychological violence. Furthermore, damage of school property had a low percentage of occurrences. It is assumed that the possible reason for this finding is that in the first instance, there is a general lack of school facilities. Therefore the students rather make do with what they have. This assumption is also based on the observation of the researcher that students provide their own desks and chairs, which are the most accessible facilities to the students. This implies that due to financial constraints and embarrassments, the students would rarely damage their own chairs and desks but rather protect them.

Finally, the results of the research have shown that respondents agree that rioting occurs by 19% and the rate of occurrence of ganging in schools was 30%. Inference can be made from these results that ganging and rioting is not a very common activity in secondary schools in Osun State.

Findings from the research question were summarized into three categories of occurrence. The first category are the most common types of violence which occur in secondary schools, the second are the common types of violence, and the third category are the non-common types of violence. Thus, the most common types of violence are abusing, making jest of others, and fighting. Furthermore, the common types of violence are slapping, bullying and fighting while the non-common types of violence are ganging, rioting, damaging of school property and rape. Finally, in view of these findings, the nature of violence prevalent in secondary schools in Osun State Nigeria is interpersonal and mostly physical and psychological.

The research hypothesis stated that parenting styles have no significant effect on the disposition of students to violence. The four generally categorized parenting styles, which are the permissive styles, the democratic style, authoritarian and neglecting styles, were tested. The results of the test showed that there is a significant effect of parenting styles on students' dispositions to violence. This finding confirms that the manner in which a child is brought up determines a child's disposition to violence. According to Goodman and Gurian (2005), the authoritarian parenting style tends to lack the teaching of social competence, while the permissive parenting style does not encourage the child to control his or her impulses. Also, the neglecting parenting style displays un-involvement and carelessness in the child's upbringing. Thus, it is likely that for reasons such as these, the parenting style adopted by a parent determines his or her child's disposition to violence.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, conclusions are made that the parenting style adopted in child upbringing plays a vital role in child's behaviour ($F=7.643$, $p<0.05$). Parents that are uninvolved in the upbringing of their children dispose such children to violence. This is because there is every probability for children to develop violent behaviour in their early years. Every child has a tendency to engage in one act of violence at a time, but effective parenting puts it at a minimal and allows the child to develop social competence. According to the study, the neglecting parenting style disposes a child to displaying violent behaviour, while the democratic parenting style is the most effective styles in avoiding display of violent behaviour in children.

The study also revealed that the nature of violence that occurred in secondary schools is mostly physical and psychological. However, the most prevalent is physical violence where fighting occurred by 71%, while abusing the most prevalent psychological violence occurred at a frequency level of 62%.

The major implication of this research is that parents and the environment they provide in the home can make or mar the child in terms of behaviour. Thus, counselors should not only concentrate on organizing programs for students in the school but should also organize preventive counselling programs for parents, to promote a healthy environment in the home and consequentially provide a violent free society at large.

Counsellors should also encourage parents to be actively involved in the upbringing of their children. In other words, this demands that parents need to avoid the neglecting parenting style and rather uphold the democratic parenting style above every other style. One way to empower parents is to supply them with information that will enable them understand and respond appropriately to their children's behaviour. Finally, school authorities should devise strategies that will reduce the cultural acceptance of violence.

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