

Child Abuse and Family Background as Predictors of Poor Academic Performance Among Adolescents in Special Schools of Ibadan-Nigeria

by

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Abstract

This study investigated child abuse and family background as predictors of poor academic performance among adolescents in special schools in Ibadan. The study adopted the descriptive survey design of correlational type. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select four secondary schools for this study. From each of these schools, twenty-five (25) respondents were selected among the special students. The total sample size for the study was one hundred (100) students selected randomly. Data was collected using reliable instrument (Family Background Scale $\alpha = 0.79$; Child Abuse Scale $\alpha = .89$; Academic Performance Questionnaire $\alpha = .73$). The three research questionnaires were raised and tested at 0.05 level of significance using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression statistical tools. The study found that, academic performance of adolescents in Special Schools in Ibadan was significantly correlated with child abuse ($r = .542$; $p < .05$) and family background ($r = .336$; $p < .05$). The analysis of variance performed on multiple regressions yielded an F- ratio value of 2.732 with 22.4% of independent variables accounted for poor academic performance with the significant value of 0.05 level. Based on the finding of this study, it was recommended that counselling psychologists should create more awareness on the impact of the predictors to the poor academic performance of students.

Keywords: Child Abuse, Family Background, Poor Academic Performance, Adolescents, Special Schools

Introduction

Globally, education remains the engine for development in all sectors. Meaningful development is partly measured by quality education and resources. This underscores the importance of education at different level from primary to secondary levels that subsequently

feeds tertiary education (Chishimba et al., 2013). It is generally believed that the basis of any true development is the investment in human resources. Therefore, formal education remains the vehicle for social, political and economic development as well as social mobilization in any society (Muraina & Adewuyi, 2017). Education is crucial in any type of society for the preservation of the lives of members and the maintenance of the social structure. Under certain circumstances, education also promotes social change. The greater proportion of education is informal and acquired through life experiences usually involving the younger generation with elders in the society.

Under normal circumstances education grows out of the environment, the learning process being directly related to the pattern of work in the society. Education has been universally accepted as the bedrock and engine of growth. It is a child's passport out of poverty (Adewuyi, Jimoh & Falaye, 2020). The highly prized possession that anyone can have is education. It is the foundation for higher living standards and an important tool in the long-term eradication of poverty. Education provides knowledge and information which in turn brings about desirable changes in the way people think, feel and act. The importance of education cannot be over-emphasized. Further, education is the imparting of knowledge, positive judgments and well-developed wisdom. Education has one of its fundamental aspects, the imparting of culture from generation to generation (Mkandawire et al., 2019). According to Nduka (2015), education was defined as a relatively permanent change in behaviour because of experience. Education is the instrument for economic empowerment and development of sustainable economy.

The issue of poor academic performance of students in Nigeria especially those in special schools has been of much concern to the government, parents, teachers and even students themselves. Poor academic performance in recent years was so great that many students fall short of the requirement necessary for admission into schools. According to Nwokocha and Amadike (2005), academic performance of students is the yardstick for testing educational quality of a nation. Hence, it is expedient to maintain a high performance in internal and mostly external examinations. The issue of academic performance has been a major problem confronting the educational sector. Researchers and educators have no doubt that academic performance or achievement in school is determined by numerous factors (Mumba & Mkandawire, 2020). These factors are as complex and varied as those that influence all aspects of student's development (Adeyemi & Ajibade, 2011).

There is no general accepted definition of child abuse as a result of differences in the perception of what is generally acceptable as abusive or not. The African Network for Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) defines child abuse as “the intentional, unintentional or well intentional acts which endanger the physical health, emotional, moral and the educational welfare of children. Child abuse can be seen as any act of omission or commission, physical or psychological mistreatment or neglect of a child by its parents, guardians, caregiver, or other adults that may endanger the child’s physical, psychological, or emotional health development. In this definition, wrongfully maltreating a child or selfishly making an unfair use of a child’s services by adults responsible for the child constitutes child abuse (Hopper, 2014). Child abuse can be broadly categorized into five perspectives namely physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect and child exploitation.

Physical abuse may be seen as the inflicting of a non-accidental bodily injury on a child. The injury may not have been intended by the parent or caretaker and is not an accident but may be due to over-discipline or corporal punishment that may not be appropriate or is unjustifiable for the child at that age. *Emotional abuse* is also known as verbal abuse, mental abuse, or emotional maltreatment. Emotional abuse can thus be seen as any attitude, behaviour, or failure to act on the part of a caregiver who interferes with a child’s mental health, social development, or sense of self-worth. It is probably the least, understood, yet the cruelest and most destructive type of abuse. It attacks the child self-concept making the child see his/herself as unworthy, worthless and incapable. *Sexual abuse* is defined as the employment, use of persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conducts (Muraina & Adewuyi, 2017). Sexual abuse is a most often under reported form of child maltreatment. Sexually abused children experience emotional problems from a feeling of guilt and shame.

Shonk and Cicchetti (2018) found that childhood maltreatment can influence children’s performance of competencies (e.g. engagement in academic tasks) that are necessary for optimal learning and achievement in school. Childhood maltreatment has major economic implications for adolescents. Childhood maltreatment, and aversive parenting practices, in general, has the potential to delay academic progress of students. Although its potential impact is large, evidence of causal effect of maltreatment on children’s longer term outcomes in school is generally lacking.

Also, lower school engagement and/or poorer academic performance have also been associated with experiencing maltreatment and/or conflict with parents. Adolescents with levels of abuse may have more opportunities to participate in numerous types of risky behaviors, these youth are likely to have higher involvement in delinquency. Research also finds that a history of child maltreatment (Crozier & Barth 2015) and poor parenting are associated with victimization later in life. Finally, adolescents who have experienced neglect or abuse and ineffective parenting have been shown to suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and/or depression. In addition, negative family experiences may have cumulative effects and can be detrimental to normative adolescent development resulting in poorer academic performance.

The importance of the family as the primary socialization agent as emphasized throughout this section of the study is worthy of note. The family is the key element to ensure a disciplined, well-balanced, and strong individual who can respect other individuals, interact on a social level with the inner strength to avoid external negative influences. Empirical evidence shows that children from a broken family background develop antisocial behavior (Adewuyi & Yusuf, 2019). They found out that single parent family stands the risk of delinquent children. Children from such families constitute majority to the society's problem of armed robbery, prostitution, drug abuse etc. Psychologists have pointed out the disadvantages of single parenthood. For instance, Erikson (1964) stated that at infancy of 0 – 15 months, the child passes through a stage of Trust Vs Mistrust. At this stage, the child needs physical needs (water, food, shelter, rest etc) and psychological needs (love, warmth and affection) from parents. If these are met especially by the mother, the child develops basic trust. This implies that children who grow up without mothers develop a deep sense of mistrust in life since they did not enjoy the psychological affection from parents.

Over the years, the investigations of the factors that influence academic performance of students have attracted the interest and concern of teachers, counselors, psychologists, researchers and school administrators in Nigeria. This is because of the public outcries concerning the low standard of education in the country. The declining quality of education in the country and the breeding of graduates with little technical know-how have resulted in serious setbacks to the industrial development of the nation. Different factors can influence the academic performance of university students. Such factors may be the student's internal state (intelligence, state of health, motivation, anxiety etc.) and their environment (availability of suitable learning environment, adequacy of educational infrastructure like textbooks and well-equipped Laboratories.

The study conducted by May, Bidgood and Saebi (2006) reports that staff at the college suggested that ethnic minority students may tend to be from less worthy families and be less well supported at home and that they may be under more pressure to get a job and, therefore, more likely to drop out. This view concurs with recent findings (Palmer, 2001) in a study of dropout from post-compulsory education, that ethnic minority students were, on average, more likely to come from poorer families, and with the student feelings in the study of getting no help from parents and of it being difficult to find somewhere to study outside the university. In addition, they felt that the goals that parents set for their children vary with culture, so that motivation and thus achievement are closely linked to parental attitudes. They also agreed that the cultures of ethnic groups may lead to different approaches to discipline and that these differed between the sexes, parents being generally stricter with females (Daka et al., 2020; Kafusha et al., 2021). Therefore, the study focused to solve the problems of persistent poor academic performance among adolescents in special schools in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess Child Abuse and Family Background as Predictors of Poor Academic Performance among Adolescents in Special Schools in Ibadan.

Objectives of the study are to:

- i. examine the pattern of relationship that exists among the factors of interest (child abuse and family background) and poor academic performance among adolescents in Special Schools in Ibadan.
- ii. investigate the joint effect of (child abuse and family background) on poor academic performance among adolescents in Special Schools in Ibadan.
- iii. find out the relative effect of (child abuse and family background) to poor academic performance among adolescents in Special Schools in Ibadan.

Research Questions

1. What is the pattern of relationship that exists between the independent variables (child abuse and family background) and the dependent factors (poor academic performance) among adolescents in Special Schools in Ibadan?
2. What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (child abuse and family background) and the dependent factors (poor academic performance) among adolescents in Special Schools in Ibadan

3. What is the relative contribution of (child abuse and family background) and the dependent factors (poor academic performance) among adolescents in Special Schools in Ibadan?

Methodology

The research design adopted in this study was descriptive research design. The population for this covered all adolescents in Special Schools in Ibadan. Ibadan has ten (10) Local Government Areas, the population of this study covered (11-19 years) a specific age range that designates the middle adolescents which the researchers found suitable for this study. For purposes of this investigation, with a view to making generalization about the population, the researcher therefore employed a simple random sampling technique, four (4) special schools were selected from Ibadan as a whole, twenty-five (25) students were randomly selected through balloting in each of the selected special schools which made up Ibadan Metropolis. In all, a total of one hundred (100) adolescents from special school were used for the study.

Data Collection Instruments

A questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into sections A and B. Section A contains the demographic information of the respondents. These demographic characteristics include: Age, sex, religion and Parental educational level. Section B contains the other three standardized instruments which were used for the study. They are, Family Background Scale ($\alpha = 0.79$), Child Abuse Scale ($\alpha = .89$) and Academic Performance Questionnaire ($\alpha = .73$). The data collected from the study were analyzed using simple percentages, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and multiple regression statistical method at $p < 0.05$ level of significance.

Results

Research question one: What are the relationships that exist among the independent (child abuse and family background) and the dependent factor (poor academic performance) among adolescents in Special Schools in Ibadan?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Inter-correlations among the variables

Variables	N	M ea n	S D	1	2	3
Academic performance	100	25.2	1.05	1.00		
Child abuse	100	28.4	7.61	.54**	1.00	
Family background	100	27.3	6.80	.336**	.249*	1.00

** Correlation Significant at 0.01 levels

Table 1 contains descriptive statistics and inter-correlations among the study variables. As shown in the table, academic performance of adolescents in Special Schools in Ibadan is significantly correlated with child abuse ($r = .542$; $p < .05$) and family background ($r = .336$; $p < .05$). There were also significant correlations among the independent variables.

Research question two

What is the joint effect of the independent variables (child abuse and family background) on the dependent factor (poor academic performance) among adolescents in Special Schools in Ibadan?

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis showing joint effect of the extent at independent variables on academic performance

R = .468

R² = .236

Adjusted R² = .224

Standard error of estimate = 3.63858

Analysis of variance				
Model	Sum of square (SS)	DF	Mean square	F
Regression	353.960	2	88.490	2.732
Residual	9555.560	18	32.392	
Total	9909.520	100		

The table shows that the independent variables (child abuse and family background) jointly contributed to poor academic performance among adolescents in Special Schools in Ibadan. The value of R Square = .236 and Multiple R² (adjusted) = .224. The analysis of variance performed

on the multiple regressions yielded an F- ratio value of 2.732 with 22.4% of independent variables accounted for poor academic performance among adolescents in Special Schools in Ibadan and was found to be significant at 0.05 level.

Research question three

What is the relative contribution of each of the independent variable (child abuse and family background) to the dependent factor (poor academic performance) among adolescents in Special Schools in Ibadan?

Table 3: Relative Contribution of Independent Variables to the Prediction

Model	Unstandar	Standardized		t	P
	dized coefficient s B	Standar d error	β		
Constant	21.065	3.427		6.146	.000
Child abuse	.007	.040	.169	1.178	<.05
Family background	.059	.045	.121	1.320	<.05

The table shows that the independent variables made a significant contribution to the prediction of poor academic performance among adolescents in Special Schools in Ibadan. In terms of magnitude of contribution, child abuse made the most significant contribution ($\beta = .169$; $t = 1.178$; $p < 0.05$) to the prediction followed by family background ($\beta = .121$; $t = 1.320$; $p < 0.05$).

Discussion of Results

The result of the first research question revealed that there were positive relationships that exist, academic performance of adolescents in Special Schools in Ibadan is significantly correlated with child abuse and family background. This is in line with the findings of Shonk and Cicchetti

(2001) who found that childhood maltreatment influences children's performance of competencies (e.g. engagement in academic tasks) that are necessary for optimal learning and achievement in school. Childhood maltreatment has major economic implication for adolescents especially in special schools. The findings further outlined that childhood maltreatment, and aversive parenting practices, in general, has the potential to delay academic progress of students. Although its potential impact is large, evidence of causal effect of maltreatment on children longer term outcome in school is generally lacking. Furthermore, on average, children who are maltreated received lower ratings of performance from their teachers, score lower on cognitive assessments and standardized tests of academic achievement, obtain lower grades, and get suspended from school and retained in grade more frequently.

In the same vein, Uwaifo's (2008) examined the effects of family structure and parenthood on the academic performance of Nigerian students in special schools. The sample for the study consisted of 240 students drawn from the six randomly selected special schools across. The results also indicated significant differences in academic performance of male and female students compared on two types of family background. Contrary to the above findings, Ushie, Emeka, Ononga and Owolabi (2012) found that there was no significant difference in the academic performance of students from single parent families and those from two parent families.

The result obtained from the second research question shows that there was a joint effect of the independent variables on poor academic performance among adolescents in Special Schools in Ibadan. Research shows that the joint effect of child abuse and family background has a significant effect on academic performance. This corresponds with the runaways report that having experienced high rates of physical and/or sexual abuse and poor parenting while at home has a great side effect on academic performance, also, lower school engagement and/or poorer academic performance have also been associated with experiencing maltreatment and/or conflict with parents (Crozier & Barth 2005). Because adolescents with lower levels of parental monitoring and closeness may have more opportunities to participate in numerous types of risky behaviors, these youth are likely to have higher involvement in delinquency. Research also finds that a history of child maltreatment and poor parenting are associated with victimization later in life.

In consonant with this finding, Pong, Dronkers and Hampden-Thompson (2013) who found that the United States and New Zealand ranked the least among the countries they compared in terms of equality of achievement between children from single-parent families and those from two-parent homes. The multilevel analysis showed that single parenthood was less harmful when

family policies equalize resources between single and two-parent families. In addition, the single- and two-parent achievement gap is greater in countries where single-parent families are more prevalent. These findings suggest that belonging to a single parent family does not mean the person is academically condemned since certain policy implemented could turn fortunes. This discovery supports that of Uwaifo (2008).

The last research question examined the relative contribution of each of the independent variable to f poor academic performance among adolescents in Special Schools in Ibadan. The result shows that child abuse made the most significant contribution to the prediction followed by family background. This is similar to Schickedanz (2005) who reported that children of passive parents were found to perform poorly educationally. Valez (2009) and Anyaegbu, Aghauche, and Nnamani, (2016) found that academic performance is positively related to having parents who enforce rules at home. The obviousness of the research findings reported in this study is that family background improves facets of children's education such as daily attendance. It was expected that family background and family engagement would have a large role on children's education expectation. The foregoing, have shown that one of the greatest barriers to high education expectation for a good number of students, is lack of parental engagement in children's education.

In consonance, Adewuyi and Muraina (2019) averred that the role of the family especially parents is to be a caregiver, provider of education, love, intimacy and protection from infancy through the later childhood and adolescence period. But when adolescents could not find these primary responsibilities, they perform badly in schools. Howell (2003) confirms the aforesaid by stating that negative family experiences may have cumulative effects and can be detrimental to normative adolescent development resulting in poorer academic performance. The case of large family is more prevalent in third world countries which make it difficult for children from this country to perform optimally in their academic pursuit.

Conclusion

This research examined Child Abuse and Family Background as Predictors of Poor Academic Performance among Adolescents in Special Schools in Ibadan. The results of this study have clearly shown that child abuse and family factor played a very significant role in influencing Academic Performance among Adolescents in Special Schools. Based on the finding of this study, it was concluded that the greater the number of family discords, divorce, parental neglect, marital

conflict, hostility, single parenting, marital disharmony and child abuse, the greater the chance of poor academic performance.

Recommendations

From the foregoing conclusions, the following recommendations are therefore highlighted for consideration by Parents, teachers, educationist, school administrators, non-governmental agencies and policy makers. Based on the findings of this study it is recommended that:

- (1) Teacher should always demonstrate better attitudes toward both the students and their parents as that goes a long way to motivate the students to learn and make them more proactive in their academic pursuit.
- (2) The parents as well as the Governments should re-examine its financial support to students since such support is viewed as the main contributor towards the student academic performance. Research should be conducted to examine the parent spending habits on the academics of students in special schools.
- (3) There is the urgent need for both public and private sector participation in the planning, provision, implementing, supervision, monitoring and funding of educational facilities in the special school.

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