

Physical Child Abuse Among Secondary School Students in A Community in Benue State

Elufidipe-Olumide, Happiness A.¹, and Christian, Ngozi²

¹Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

²Department of Science Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract

The study aimed to examine occurrences of physical child abuse among secondary school students in a community in Benue State. The study utilized a cross-sectional research design to achieve its objectives. The data collection instrument used was the Physical Child Abuse Questionnaire (PCAQ). The study took place in Igumale, Ado Local Government Area of Benue State. The survey included 800 secondary school students from six secondary schools in Igumale. There were 300 respondents in the sample. Three experts from the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, face validated the instrument. The instrument's reliability was determined by testing the Spearman's rank order correlation formula, resulting in a reliability coefficient of .842. The data from PCAQ copies was encoded and analyzed using IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM-SPSS) version 22 for Windows. The research questions were answered using frequencies and percentages. 58.7 per cent of secondary school children in Igumale experienced physical child abuse. 60.0 per cent of secondary school students aged 10-14 experienced physical abuse, which is higher than the 56.9% of students aged 15-19. The percentage of male secondary school students who encountered physical abuse (60.5%) is greater than the percentage of female students who experienced physical abuse (57.3%). The percentage of physical abuse among parents with no formal education is 59.6%, primary education is 52.6%, secondary education is 76.9%, and tertiary education is 49.2%. Therefore, parents with secondary education have the highest rate of physical abuse. The recommends greater investment in programmes that have shown effectiveness in averting abuse before it occurs.

Keywords: Physical child abuse, students, gender, parents & cross-sectional study

1.0 Introduction

Child abuse is a prominent global issue, with Nigeria receiving notable focus because of its substantial coverage in the media and public awareness. Globally, about 75% (3 in 4) of children between the ages of 2 and 4, which amounts to 300 million children, experience frequent physical abuse and/or psychological violence from their parents and carers (WHO, 2017). The family, typically seen as the main entity responsible for safeguarding and looking after children and teenagers, can paradoxically become a source of harm, particularly when the abuse is perpetrated by legal guardians. An estimated 40,150 children under 18 years of age die from homicide annually, with part of these deaths presumably attributed to child maltreatment (Esposti, Humphreys & Jenkins et al, 2019). This figure likely underestimates the actual scope of the issue, as a notable share of deaths resulting from child abuse are inaccurately assigned to falls, burns, drowning, and other reasons (Retter, 2022). The family unit is considered the primary source of values, beliefs, and attitudes, and is essential in establishing the initial attachments that influence subsequent relationships. Secondary students at home may experience

different types of abuse, such as physical, emotional, sexual, spiritual, and economic abuse. This study primarily examines the prevalent problem of physical abuse among secondary school students. Physical abuse involves the application of physical force that causes harm to the victim or places them in danger of harm. The actions involved are beating, kicking, knocking, punching, choking, and confinement (Miller 2010). Female genital mutilation is physical abuse. Physical abuse is a prevalent kind of abuse. Physical abuse, as defined by Dutton (2011), is any deliberate action that employs force against another person's body, posing a danger of physical injury, harm, and/or pain. Forms of physical abuse within a family may be shoving, hitting, slapping, choking, twisting bodily parts, administering undesired substances, and using weapons against any family member. If a someone is enduring physical injury inflicted by family members, they are facing physical abuse. The enduring effects of physical abuse affect the kid in their adulthood, their family, and the community. Obi and Ozumba (2013) discovered that 83% of participants in their research study experienced physical abuse. Physical abuse involves deliberate actions by

a career, typically a parent, that cause injury to a child's well-being, growth, or self-respect. In severe instances, physical abuse might lead to the fatality of the child. Hamm (2016) asserts that physical abuse in children can lead to long-term disabilities such as brain or eye damage, impaired interpersonal relationships like difficulty trusting others in adult relationships or engaging in violent relationships, a tendency towards emotional disturbances, low self-esteem, depression, and an increased likelihood of perpetrating child abuse as a parent. This mistreatment may negatively impact the child's academic performance. Secondary school pupils experience immediate emotional suffering and damage from physical assault. Economic abuse involves actions such as stealing or deceiving a loved one, withholding money for necessities like food and medical care, manipulating or exploiting a family member for financial benefit, and restricting a loved one's ability to work or choose their vocation (Dabu 2011). Child abuse is particularly prevalent in sub-Saharan African countries, with over 80% of children in these regions claiming to be experiencing maltreatment at home. 45% of children in Ghana and Nigeria were impacted by witnessing their mothers

being abused, according to Sherr et al. (2015). Child abuse cases have been widely documented in East African countries, particularly through the media. Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya have reported incidences of child abuse in most of their communities, including child battery and marital violence, which have negative impacts on children's well-being (Devaney, 2015). A 2014 report by UNICEF in Kenya revealed a 47% rate of child abuse and highlighted the vulnerability of many children to its detrimental effects. Adolescents have reported cases of child abuse to the Country Commissioners Offices, as documented by the UN in 2014.

Child abuse is widespread in many areas of Nigeria due to a deeply rooted cultural idea that views it as socially acceptable to educate and discipline children. Child abuse instances continue to persist despite attempts to address the issue, showing no clear decrease and affecting individuals of various ages, tribes, religions, and social statuses (Amnesty Nigeria, 2021). As per the National Crime Victimization Surveys by the CLEEN Foundation, 33% of respondents admit to experiencing child abuse, revealing a significantly high occurrence (CLEEN Foundation, 2013). The poll indicates a

national rise in child abuse from 21% in 2011 to 30% in 2013 (CLEEN Foundation, 2013). In 2012, the CLEEN Foundation conducted a National Crime and Safety Survey which revealed that 31% of the participants reported to experiencing child abuse. The residents of Igumale and Ado are recognized for their tendency towards violence, often engaging in communal clashes with other settlements, particularly Ohaukwu in Ebonyi State. This study intends to assess the prevalence of physical child maltreatment among secondary school students in Igumale.

Purpose of the Study

Specifically, the study determined the:

- i. proportion of secondary school students who experienced physical abuse in Igumale
- ii. proportion secondary school students who experience physical abuse-based socio-demographic factors of gender, age and parental level of education.

3.0 Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative research method, employing a numerical and statistical approach for data collecting and analysis. The current study utilized a cross-sectional research design to achieve its

objectives. The survey utilized the Prevalence of Child Abuse Questionnaire (PCAQ) as the instrument for data gathering. The study was conducted in Igumale, one of the five districts in Ado LGA. The study included 800 secondary school students from six secondary schools in Igumale, the headquarters of Ado local government area in Benue State. There were 300 respondents in the sample. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011), a sample size of 260 or more is recommended when the population size is 800 or above at a 95% confidence level (5% interval). Three experts from the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, confirmed the face validity of the study instrument. The instrument's reliability was determined by using the Spearman's rank-order correlation formula, resulting in a reliability coefficient of .842. Ogbazi and Okpala (1994) said that an instrument is deemed reliable for a study if the index value in a reliability test is equal to or greater than .60. Therefore, the instrument was adjudged reliable for use in the investigation. The data from PCAQ copies was encoded and analyzed using IBM Statistical Package for

Social Sciences (IBM-SPSS) version 22 for Windows.

Research questions 1-2 were answered using frequencies and percentages

4.0 Results

Research question one.

What is the proportion of secondary school students who experienced physical

abuse in Igumale? Data answering this research question are contained in Table 1.

Table 1

Response on the proportion of secondary school students who experienced physical abuse in Igumale (n=300)

S/N	Physical abuse	Yes f (%)	NO f (%)
1	Does the treatment of your parents/siblings make u isolate yourself from others?	251 (83.7)	49 (16.3)
2	Have u been experiencing verbal abuse from teachers/students?	147 (49.0)	153 (51.0)
3	Does your teachers terrorize and intimidate you?	115 (38.3)	185(61.7)
4	Has any of your mates ever hurt you physically in any way?	172 (57.3)	128 (42.7)
5	Have you been experiencing depression and anxiety?	175 (58.3)	125 (41.7)
	Cluster %	58.7	41.3

Result in Table 1 show that more than half (58.7%) of secondary school students experienced physical child abuse in Igumale.

Research question two: What is the proportion of secondary school students who

experiences physical based on socio-demographic factors of gender, age and

parents' level of education? Data answering this research question are contained in Table 2-4.

Table 2

Response on the proportion of secondary school students who experienced physical abuse in based on age (n=300)

S/N	Physical Abuse	10-14yrs (n=170) f (%)	15-19yrs (n=130) f (%)
1	Does the treatment of your parents/siblings make u isolate yourself from others?	147 (86.5)	104 (80.0)
2	Have u been experiencing verbal abuse from teachers/students?	83 (48.8)	64 (49.2)
3	Does your teachers terrorize and intimidate you.	64(37.6)	51 (39.2)
4	Has any of your mates ever hurt you physically in any way?	103 (60.6)	69 (53.1)
5	Have you been experiencing depression and anxiety	97 (57.1)	78 (60.0)
	Cluster %	60.0	56.9

The results in Table 2 show that secondary school students aged 10-14years (60.0%) experienced physical abuse more than those aged 15-19years (56.9).

Table 3

Response on the proportion of secondary school student who experienced physical abuse based on gender (n=300)

S/N	Physical Abuse	Male (n=129) f (%)	Female (n=171) f (%)
-----	----------------	--------------------------	----------------------------

1	Does the treatment of your parents/siblings make u isolate yourself from others?	115 (89.1)	136 (79.5)
2	Have u been experiencing verbal abuse from teachers/students?	68 (52.7)	89 (46.2)
3	Does your teachers terrorize and intimidate you?	47 (36.4)	68 (39.8)
4	Has any of your mates ever hurt you physically in any way?	74 (57.4)	98 (57.3)
5	Have you been experiencing depression and anxiety	77 (59.7)	98 (57.3)
	Cluster %	60.5	57.3

Results in Table 3 show that 60.5% of male experience physical abuse while 57.3% of the female experience physical abuse.

Table 4

Response on proportion of secondary school student who experienced physical abuse based on parental level of education in Igumale (n=300)

S/N	NFE (n=109) f (%)	PE (n=78) f (%)	SE (n=52) f (%)	TE (n=61) f (%)
1	99 (90.8)	65 (83.3)	46 (88.5)	41 (67.2)
2	55 (50.5)	31 (39.7)	27 (51.9)	34 (55.7)
3	38 (34.9)	18 (23.1)	32 (61.5)	27 (44.3)
4	58 (53.2)	42 (53.8)	41 (78.8)	31 (50.8)
5	74 (67.9)	39 (50.0)	39 (75.0)	23 (37.7)
Cluster %	59.6	52.6	76.9	49.2

Key NFE= No Formal Education, PE= primary education, SE= secondary education, TE= Tertiary Education.

Results in Table 4 shows that physical abuse among parents with NYE is 59.6%, PE 52.6%, SE 76.9% and TE is 49.w%. Parent with SE has the highest percentage of physical abuse.

Summary and Major Findings

The major findings of the study are summarized in line with specific objectives and hypotheses as follows:

1. More than half (58.7%) of secondary school students experienced physical child abuse in Igumale. Table 1.
2. Proportion of Secondary school student's aged 10-14years (60.0%) experienced physical abuse is more than those aged 15-19years (56.9). Table 2.
3. Proportion of Male (60.5%) secondary school students who experienced physical abuse is higher than female (57.3%) experienced physical abuse. Table 3.
4. Proportion of physical abuse among parent with NFE 59.6%, PE= 52.6%, SE=76.9%, and TE=49.2%. Thus, parent with SE has the highest percentage of physical abuse. Table 4.

5.0 DISCUSSION

Proportion of Physical abuse among secondary school students

Table One data shows that a substantial majority (58.7%) of secondary school students in Igumale have encountered physical child abuse. This result is in line with expectations, as there is a well-documented association between physical abuse and negative results in academic and socio-emotional domains. Studies consistently indicate that students who have experienced physical abuse typically have lower academic performance and face difficulties in socio-emotional areas compared to students who have not been abused. These issues result in decreased academic performance, more suspensions, and a higher rate of grade retention. The abused students exhibit less academic involvement, deficiencies in social skills, and diminished ego resiliency, supporting Chester et al. (2016) who found that physical abuse predicts negative impacts on children's academic and behavioral adjustment, leading to deficiencies in academic engagement, social skills, ego resiliency, and ego control.

Proportion of secondary school students who experiences physical abuse-based

socio-demographic factors of gender, age and parental level of education

Table 2 shows that there was a higher occurrence of physical abuse among secondary school students aged 10-14 years (60.0%) compared to those aged 15-19 years (56.9%). This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Hershkowitz, Lamb, and Katz (2014), which found that children between 9 and 16 years old had greater incidences of penetrative physical abuse compared to children aged 7-8 years, with the older children showing the highest percentage.

Table 3 shows that 60.5% of male secondary school students in Igumale suffered physical abuse based on their gender. These results align with Afifi et al.'s (2014) research, which indicated that boys are more prone to physical abuse, whereas girls tend to display more severe repercussions from such abuse.

The results from Table 4 show that most (76.9%) students attending secondary schools in Igumale were subjected to physical abuse, correlated with their parents' level of education. Herdman and Kamitsuru (2014) found that a prevalent factor leading to physical abuse of children is the absence of essential information, skills, and competence

required for child care and safety by the parents.

Conclusion

The study investigated the prevalence of physical child abuse among secondary school students, finding that more than 50% of students in Igumale reported being victims of physical child abuse. Students aged 10-14 experienced physical abuse more frequently than those aged 15-19. Over half of male secondary school students in Igumale reported experiencing physical abuse in terms of gender. Furthermore, more than 50% of students experienced physical abuse, which was connected to the educational level of their parents in Igumale.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, discussions and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Increased funds should be allocated to existing proactive abuse prevention programs, including family counselling and home visits by health educators for parents.
- ii. Implementation of preventative programs entails community needs

- assessments, coordination with partners, family engagement, cultural competence, training initiatives, as well as obtaining finance.
- iii. Dissemination of information on well-being and strategies for the support provided by programs and systems. This includes resources on protective factors, marriage, fatherhood, and parenting.

Limitations of the Study

The following limitations were encountered in the course of this study

- i. Difficulty in obtaining optimal collaboration from the students during the distribution of the questionnaires.
- ii. Some of the students refrained from providing complete information in their responses.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Many studies have been carried out on prevalence of child abuse, but some areas still need attention. Therefore, the researcher suggests that the following studies be considered by interested researchers.

- i. Assessing the awareness of child abuse among secondary school students in Igumale, Benue State.
- ii. Investigating the challenges and repercussions of child abuse on secondary school students through research.
- iii. Examining how child abuse affects the academic performance of secondary school students.

References

- Afifi, T. O., Macmillan, H. L., Boyle, M., Taillieu, T., Cheung, K., & Sareen, J. (2014). Child abuse and mental disorders in Canada. *CMAJ*, *186*(9), E324–E332.
<https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.131792>
- Amnesty Nigeria. "*Nigeria: Unheard Voices – abuse against women in the family*". Retrieved May 19, 2021.
- Chester, D. L., Jose, R. M., Aldlyami, E., King, H., & Moiemmen, N. S. (2006). Non-accidental burns in children—Are we neglecting neglect? *Burns*, *32*(2), 222–228.

- <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.burns.2005.08.018>
- United nations children's funds (UNICEF). (2011). *Child rights act 2003 fact sheet: Child rights legislation in Nigeria*. <http://www.unicef.org/>
- CLEEN Foundation. (2013). *National crime Victimization surveys*.
- Dabu, J. T. (2011). *Impact of spousal abuse on marital adjustment of couples in North-West senatorial district of Benue State*. Unpublished master of education (M. Ed) dissertation. Benue State University.
- Daily Trust. (2013). Cultural beliefs fuel child abuse. *Archived from the original on September 26, 2013*. Retrieved 2013/9/21.
- Degli Esposti, M. D., Humphreys, D. K., Jenkins, B. M., Gasparrini, A., Pooley, S., Eisner, M., & Bowes, L. (2019). Long-term trends in child maltreatment in England and Wales, 1858–2016: An observational, time-series analysis. *The Lancet Public Health*, 4(3), e148–e158. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667\(19\)30002-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(19)30002-7)
- Devaney, J. (2015). *Understanding domestic abuse and sexual abuse: prevalence, Policy and practice in Healy*. Routledge.
- Dutton, D. G. (2010). *Rethinking child abuse*. University of British Columbia Press.
- Dutton, M. A. (2011). Post-traumatic therapy with child abuse survivors. In M. B. Williams & J. F. Sommer (Eds.), *Handbook of Post-traumatic therapy* (pp. 146–161). Greenwood Press.
- Hamm, S. (2016). Abuse against takes centre stage at the women's world forum against abuse. Retrieved May 12, 2011. <http://www.hr.ca/tribune/viewArticle>
- Herdman, T. H., & Kamitsuru, S. (2014). *NANDA. Nursing diagnoses 2015–2017* (10th ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hershkowitz, I., Lamb, M. E., & Katz, C. (2014). Allegation rates in forensic child abuse investigations: Comparing the revised and standard NICHD protocols. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 20(3), 336–344. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037391>

Miller, O. (2010). Education for all.
Retrieved June 18, 2011.
<http://www.ehow.com/education>

Education Pankshin, Plateau State,
Nigeria. *Shodh Sari*, 02, 03, 251–260.
<https://doi.org/10.59231/sari7603>

Obi, S. N., & Ozumba, B. C. (2017). Factors associated with child abuse in South-East Nigeria. *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, 27(1), 75–78.

United Nations Children’s Fund. (2017). A familiar face: Abuse in the lives of children and adolescents [Internet]. United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund.

Ogwazu, J. E., & Ayannuga, O. M. (2024). Teachers’ Integration Strategies and Challenges on inclusion in selected public primary schools in Lagos, Nigeria. *Edumania-An International Multidisciplinary Journal*, 02(2), 175–192.

Received on Dec 31, 2023

Accepted on March 28, 2024

Published on Jul 01, 2024

<https://doi.org/10.59231/edumania/9046>

Retter, E. (2022). Number of “hidden” abuse homicides double known figure as murder rejected as cause. *Mirror*.
<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/hundreds-hidden-victims-who-vanished-26379045>

[PHYSICAL CHILD ABUSE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN A COMMUNITY IN BENUE STATE](#) © 2024 by [Happiness A. Elufidipe-Olumide and Ngozi Christian](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](#)



United Nations Children’s Fund. (2014). *Hidden in plain sight: A statistical analysis of abuse against children*.

Milham, R.S. (2023). Impact of School’s Violence on Educational Career of Female Students with Hearing Impairment in Federal College of