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The Impact of Child Abuse on Academic Performance of Youths in Calabar-South Local Government Area

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ABSTRACT

The effect of child abuse on the academic performance of youth and children has become of great concern to many people especially in developed countries. This paper examined the major causative agents to child abuse. Findings revealed that all the variables considered as aspects of parents attitude towards children education are all significant at 0.05 alpha levels. This was affirmed in the analysis result with (x^2) at 0.05 levels of significance had a value of 3.5 which implies that parents positive attitudes to their children significantly affect the academic performances of their children. Therefore, to avert this menace in our society parents should be economically empowered by government and NGOs and should track down ruthlessly with people caught in child trafficking

Keywords: Child abuse, Calabar, Education, Social Problems, Family

INTRODUCTION

Child abuse is one of the most common social problems in our society which have attracted attention to both the government and private individuals. This is because the wellbeing of a child in any nation should be of paramount importance to the society (Helper, 1922). Today, child abuse potentially has major economic implications for students especially for US schools. According to Kramer (1997) over 8% of US children experience sexual abuse before age 18 while 17% experienced physical abuse and 18% experience physical neglect. Ciechetti (2001) in his analysis of the effect of child abuse opined that childhood maltreatment and aversive parent practices have the potential to delay the academic performance of a child hence putting them at risk for the loss of government funding which also affect economic outcomes in adulthood. Children in all sorts of deviant behaviour and most children become criminals later in life due to their abuse upbringing and not being able to acquire quality education which is a scenario in most African countries and Nigeria is not left out of the scene (Beakman, 1967).

In Cross River State and Calabar South in particular most of the parents neglect their children and not even bothers to look into the child is faring in school, they rather invest much of their time in personal and business pursuits thus, the child

academic suffered and in most cases the child dropped out of school (Ebosele, 2000). It is in this light of the danger that this paper seeks to evaluate the effect of child abuse on the academic performance of youth with specific reference to examining the causative factor that affect a child's academic performance in school.

A child is physically abused if he/she is beaten up too often raped or over-used in the home on the farm or in the factory (Agbabo 2006). Although, it is true that when you spare the rod you spoil the child, the use of the rod or cane must be used with caution and as a last resort whenever the house help breaks the mistress's cutleries spoils the refrigerator or damages the television set, the mistress naturally feels very bad and discipline. Today, child labour has been linked to greater grade retardation (Kazah, 2002, Okozi and Obikeize, 2001) lower years of attained schooling (Naidu, 1985). Definitive answers on whether the child's labour lower cognitive attainment requires direct estimation of educational production functions. Abudu (1987) reported that working did hurt standardized first scores and grades although the effect was quite small. Bequele (1997) found that working more than 15 hours per week while in secondary school led to lower grades less time spent on homework, increased likelihood of dropout.

According to Whiteman and Deutesch (1968) in their research findings showed that the level of parents' education affects the academic performance of the child. Parents who are intelligent and well educated will provide the child with a favourable environment that encourages the child to develop an interest similar to their own and for him to do well in school (Ebosele, 2001) Barmai (2007) tend to agree that parents academic achievement desires and ambitions influences the child's academic achievement and desire to learn. The educational level of the parent is probably the most family effect towards appropriate cognitive development and yet also observed that parents who are well educated generally value education and expect and desire their children to become well educated perhaps between than themselves (Heper, 2002).

Finkelhor (1986) and Gelles (1976) observed that the academic achievement of abused children is generally below average. This conception sees child abuse as a stumbling block to the academic performance of affected children putting them into a situation whereby formal education becomes exclusive to them.

METHODOLOGY

This research was focused mainly within Calabar south Local Government Area taking into consideration areas such as Henshaw town, Ekpo Abasi and Mount Zion. The area lies in the South eastern part of Nigeria and is situated in the southern part of Calabar which is the capital of Cross River State. This region is bounded in the north by the Calabar municipality, in the west by Odukpani in the east by Akpabuyo and Bakassi and the extreme south by Cameroon.

The study was based on child abuse and the effect on the academic performance. Ninety nine copies of the questionnaire were administered randomly in three zones, namely; Henshaw town, Ekpo Abasi and Mount Zion. The questionnaires were divided into two sections which involve a questionnaire on such-demographic characteristics of the people, and the other on the academic performance of the child. Interviews were conducted among child children, house-help and their parents. However, two hypotheses were tested in this research which intend to find out if "there is not" significant difference in the academic performance of students who are not subjected to child labour and students who are subjected to child labour and to also evaluate if "there is or no" relationship between parents (positive) attitude to their children education and their academic performance. This was achieved through the use of chi - square statistical tools.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The demographic characteristics of the people sampled presented in table 1 show that 52.5% of the sampled population were female which indicate a high proportion compared to males with a value of 47.5%. It was observed in that children between the ages of eighteen to twenty years constitute the major population sample with a high value of 36.4% compared to other age bracket sample in the area. However, Table 1 reveals that the majority of the person's sample attended both primary and secondary schools with value of 35.4% and 52.5% respectively.

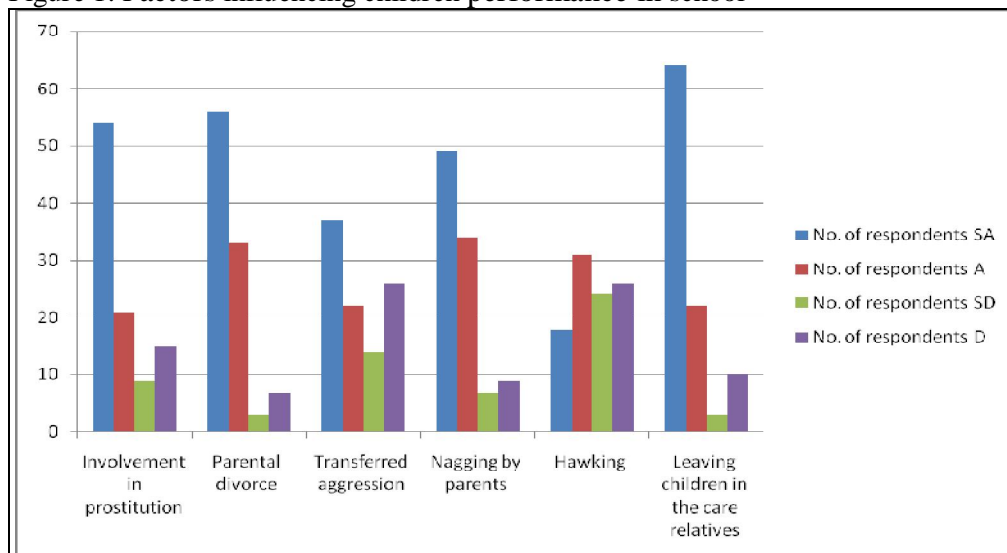
Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the people

Sex	Sampled population	Percentage
Male	47	47.5
Female	52	52.5
Total	99	100
Age	Sampled population	Percentage
04-Aug	3	3
09-Dec	30	30.3
13-17	30	30.3
18-20	36	36.4
Total	99	100
Education	Sampled population	Percentage
Nursery	12	12.1
Primary	35	35.4
Secondary	52	52.5
Total	99	100

Source: Field work (2010)

It was observed in table 2 that leaving children in the care relatives and parental divorce was one of the major factors that strongly affect child performances in school with values of 64 and 56 respondents accepting this fact. Figure 1 also revealed that 54 and 49 respondents strongly agreed to the fact that involvement in prostitution and nagging by parents were also determining factors that affect children academic performance in school. Figure 1 also indicates that 34 and 33 respondents agreed to the fact that nagging by parents and parental divorce were also factors that affect children academic performance in school. However, 26 respondents strongly disagreed with this fact that transferred aggression and hawking does not affect children performance in school.

Figure 1: Factors influencing children performance in school



The results shown in Table 2 reveal that 60 persons strongly agreed that poor nutrition constitute a problem for children academic performances in school followed by trekking long distances. The table also revealed that 54 and 53 person’s attributes poor performances of a child to broken homes and financial insecurity while 49 persons strongly agreed that poverty also affect child performances in school. It was observed that 37 and 34 persons agreed that persistent family conflicts and broken homes affect a child performance in school while 11 persons strongly disagreed to this fact while 18 persons totally disagreed that financial insecurity was not a factor to poor performances in school. However, the results show that lack of parental care can cause a child poor academic performance.

Table 2: Parental attitudes and academic performance of children

s/n	Sampled opinion	No. of respondents				Total
		SA	A	SD	D	
1.	Persistent family conflicts	52	37	4	6	99
2.	Broken homes	54	34	3	8	99
3.	Financial insecurity	53	33	5	18	99
4.	Trekking long distance	55	29	5	11	99
5.	Poor nutrition	60	22	5	12	99
6.	Poverty				10	99

Source: Field work (2010)

The central hypothesis of the study is that, there is a significant difference in the academic performance of students who are subjected to child labour and students who are not subject to child to labour. The results show that at 0.05 levels of significance, the tabulated value of 3.894 and 3.27 values were not significant. This result shows that transferred aggression does not affect the children’s performance in school. It was noticed in table 3 that 49.5% agreed while 80.5 persons disagreed that it is normal for a child to hawk little things or work for pay in support of the family economically does not affect the child’s academic performance. However, the result was significant which implies that children living with relatives and neighbours perform low academically.

Table 3: The results of academic performance of students under or not child labour

s/n	Variables	Agreed	Disagree	X ²
1.	Involvement in prostitution	75(75.8)	24(24.2)	25.26*
2.	Parental divorce	89(89.5)	10(10.1)	61.46*
3.	Nagging	83(83.8)	16(16.2)	40.0*
4.	Transfer aggression	59(59.6)	40(40.4)	3.27(NS)
5.	Hawking	46(49.5)	50(50.5)	0.04(NS)
6.	Leaving children to relative/neighbor	86(86.9)	13(13.10)	52.36*

Source: Field work (2010)

Table 4 which seeks to evaluate the relationship between parents (positive) attitudes to children education and their academic performance indicates that 3.84 tabulated values at 0.05 were obtained which shows that all the variables considered

as aspects of parents' attitudes towards children education are all significant at 0.05 alpha levels which implies that parents positive attitudes to their children significantly affect the academic performances of children. Table 4 revealed that 89.9% person's agreed that persisting family conflicts adversely affect children and differ significantly with those who disagreed 10.1% with it. This result implies that persisting family conflict and parents' attitudes affects children academic performances. It was also discovered that broken home was a significant reason for children's poor academic performance with regards to financial insecurity as a reason for children low academic performances, 76.8% agreed while 23.2 disagreed. A calculated value of 27.32 at 0.05 alpha level was obtained which indicate that parents financial security affects children's academic performance. However, poverty generally on the part of the parents was a factor that affects a child's performance in school with a value of 74.7% of those accepting this fact while 25.7% against this fact.

Table 4: Analytical results of parents' attitude and academic performance of children

S/N	Variables	Responses Agreed %	Disagree (%)	X ²
1.	Persisting family conflicts	89(89.9)	10(10.1)	61.46
2.	Broken homes	88 (88.9)	11 (11.1)	58.35
3.	Financial insecurity	76 (76.8)	23 (23.2)	27.32
4.	Trekking long distances to school	84 (84.8)	15(15.2)	46.71
5.	Poor nutrition	82 (82.8)	17 (17.2)	41.38
6.	Poverty	74 (74.7)	25 (25.3)	23.28

Source: Field work (2010)

RECOMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Many people agree that education is basis to any attack on social problems. Efforts to control child abuse depend upon public understanding but special interest groups should take on the task most avidly. In addition, this research work recommends the following as a major that can help monitor the incidence and prevalence of child abuse in the society.

- All parents should take advantage of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) and open all their children of school age to school.
- Government should track down and deal ruthlessly with people caught in child trafficking
- The government should open strategic retail centres especially to the families that depend on the use of their children for street tracking.
- Parents and government should provide basic necessities of life in terms of Education, health care, among others.
- Parent, especially mothers should be economically empowered by government and NGOs
- The church should teach, uphold and demonstrate truth and justice

Child abuse is not only prevalent in our society but it is one that deserves serious and urgent attention. Under the circumstance, the government should create conducive atmosphere for children's upbringing and initiate programs aimed at ensuring a meaningful and purposeful future for them. However, formal education

should be made free for children since education is the most vital ingredient for a child mental and moral development.

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