

# EFFECT OF FAMILY VIOLENCE ON STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ZONE B OF BENUE STATE

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated the effect of family violence on performance of secondary school students in Zone B of Benue State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 36,229 students from 84 secondary schools in 7 Local Government Areas in Zone B of Benue State. A sample of 390 students drawn from the total population of 36,229 students using simple random sampling technique was used for the study. A 12-item structured questionnaire designed by the researchers was used for data collection. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviations were used to answer the two research questions while Chi-square was used to test the two hypotheses at .05 level of significance. Findings indicated that, there is a significant effect of physical violence on students' performance in secondary schools and there is also a significant effect of psychological violence on students' performance in secondary schools. It was recommended among others that, school administrators should establish a close working relationship with specialized domestic abuse agencies such as the Coalition on Violence against Women (COVAW), Thika Integration Centre (TIC) and the police in order to protect children from physical and psychological violence.

**Keywords:** Family Violence, Performance, Physical Violence, Psychological Violence

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## Introduction

The family as a major unit of socialization is very vital for the development of children. Today, violence and conflicts in the family have threatened family relationships. Many odd things have taken place in the family system. It is not strange to see members of the same household such as father and mother, children and parents, brothers and sisters who are not in talking terms. The family is the smallest unit to which human beings belong and acquire the social norms of the society. Through the process of socialization, problems may arise from the family such as disagreement between parents leading to divorce, infertility problem, infidelity, fighting and quarrel among others. This may have some social and psychological effects on the offspring (Shija, 2004).

Violence consists of actions, words, attitudes and socio-cultural damages that prevent people from achieving their full human potentials as a family. The act could be deliberate or non-deliberate (Lareau, 2003). Violence in the family is a deliberate pattern of abusive and accusative tactics used by one member(s) of the family in an ultimate relationship to obtain or maintain power and absolute control or independence within the family. According to Dutton (2003), violence in the family covers a broad range of controlling behaviours which typically involve fear, harm, intimidation and emotional deprivation which might affect children's academic performance in schools. Violence in the family could be physical, psychological, sexual, violence based on gender and socio-economic status of parents (Ganley, 2005).

Physical violence according to Dutton (2003) is any behaviour that involves the intentional use of the force against the body of another person that risks physical injury, harm, and/or pain. Physical violence in the family include pushing, hitting, slapping and choking, twisting of a body part, forcing the ingestion of an unwanted substance and use of weapon on any family member. If a person is suffering from any physical harm caused by members of the family, then that person is experiencing physical violence. This pain can be experienced at any level. The child who witnessed or is involved in such act may not concentrate on his academic work and may not pass his examination with good grades (Galles, 2004).

Ebenuwa (2011) found that there is an increasing incidence of violence in Nigerian families and that siblings' abuse is real to Nigerian families. Miller (2010) posits that violence on children causes problem to both their physical and emotional stability. The longer physical violence of child continues, the more serious the consequences. The initial effects of physical abuse are painful and emotionally traumatic for the child. The long-term consequences of physical violence impact on the child in their adult life, on their family and on the community. In the most extreme cases, physical violence results in the death of the child. Hamm (2006) states that long-term consequences of physical violence on children include long-term disabilities, for example, brain damage or eye damage, disordered interpersonal relationships, for example, difficulty trusting others with adult relationships or violent relationships, a predisposition to emotional disturbance, feelings of low self-esteem, depression, and increased potential for child violation as a parent. All these may make the child perform poor in school.

Psychological violence, according to Johnson (2006) refers to humiliating a victim (a family member) privately or publicly, controlling what the victim can and cannot do, withholding information from the victim, deliberately doing something to make the victim feel diminished or embarrassed. It also involves isolating the victim from friends and family, implicitly blackmailing the victim by harming others when the victim expresses independence or happiness. Psychological violence involves denying a victim

access to money, other basic resources and necessities, degradation in any form of the member(s) of a family subjecting or exposing another to a behaviour that may result in psychological trauma which may include anxiety, chronic depression or post-traumatic stress disorder. Such violence is often associated with situation of power imbalance, such as abusive relationship, bullying and child abuse (Dabu, 2011).

Adegoke and Oladeji (2008) found that religion and coercive sex of abused partners have significant relationship with psycho-social well-being of a child. Aihie (2009) reiterated that, psychological violence is threatening a person of his or her possession or harming a person's sense of self-worth by putting him or her at risk of serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional or mental disorders like shouting at a partner, this was found to be the most common abuse. Undiyaundye (2009) commented that children who witness violent behaviour in the family have high level of aggression and anxiety, lower self-esteem and a greater incidence of behavioural problems than those who are not exposed to this violence which in turn, impact on the relationship among peers and their academic performance. Unfortunately, a traumatized social environment dominated by psychological violence where good attitudes and positive values are supposed to be formed cannot guarantee the development of emotional intelligence.

Exposure to these forms of violence has considerable potential to be perceived as life-threatening by victims and can leave with a sense of vulnerability, helplessness and in extreme cases, horror. The researchers observed that many students may be fearful, depressed and isolated in the class as they hardly listen to teachers when lessons are going on. Such children may not have interest in school work and may want to stay away from school. This may negatively affect their performances. Statistics released by Benue State Examination Board Makurdi indicated that the result of 2010 Junior School Certificate Examination were not encouraging as only 20.04 percent of 310,077 candidates obtained five credits in core subjects including English Language and Mathematics. Results of past performance of students in Junior School Certificate Examinations also indicated that only 27.53 percent obtained five credits in core subjects while 15.56 percent passed in 2005 and 2006 respectively. In 2007, 25.54 percent scaled the line, with the worst performance of 13.76 recorded in 2008. There was a slight improvement in 2009 when 25.99 percent passed the examination, a figure that went down in 2010 to 20.04 percent (Olurundare, 2010).

Other reasons, apart from family violence may be advanced for poor performance of students. Wathen and Macmillan (2003) noted that, children who are victims or witnesses of family violence may develop physical, psychological and behavioural problems as a result of physical, verbal, psychological and other forms of violence. This may affect their participation in school activities as they may be too scared to learn and a good number of them may lag behind in class as well as in life due to exposure to domestic violence. To Adamu (2009), family violence may reduce a child's attentiveness in class lessons as it is accompanied with emotional trauma. For most children, exposure to family violence might be interfering with their ability to effectively function in school thus, may lead to decline in their performance. Adamu (2009) further states that majority of children who witness family violence exhibit a range of disruptive behavioural problems in their schools.

The consequences of failure, anxiety and worry that accompany students from violence prone families may not only determine their low self-concept and esteem but also may deny them in imbibing the spirit of hard work; which is also the hallmark of students' performance (Tolman, 2001). Equally, absence of hard work denies one of

having appropriate challenge and learning situations for an individual's perception of his ability and competence. These characteristics may constitute a very vital factor in determining students' performance (Tolman, 2001). This indicated that favourable biological, social, physical and psychological environments at home could provide a fertile ground for the development of a child's performance in school. Unfortunately, a violent inflicted family may not produce such environments. This is because family violence may incapacitate students' ability to comprehend, evaluate and manage emotions of self and that of others. Secondary school students in Zone B of Benue State come from different family backgrounds; some may have witnessed or may be victims of family violence, which could characterize their poor performance and adjustment to school. Based on the above background, this study is set to investigate the effect of family violence on students' performance in secondary schools in Zone B of Benue State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Students' performance is affected by numerous factors like physical and psychological behaviours that result from family violence. Family violence is any act carried out with the intention of hurting member(s) of the family. These may be physically, psychologically, sexually, socially or economically. Violence among Benue families seems to be on increase and Zone B in particular is faced with one or more aspects of family violence. In most families in Zone B, husbands and wives are often not in talking terms, children are confused to join their fathers or mothers. Straus and Gelles (2000) maintained that physical fighting is on the increase between husbands and wives and between parents and children. This adversely affects students' performance. Violence acts like physical, psychological and verbal appear to have negative effect on students' performance as they often live in fear and uncertainty. Students from such homes often lack the skills for problem solving and ability to concentrate and pass their examinations. There has been mass failure in subjects like English Language and Mathematics in external examinations conducted by various bodies like West African Examinations Council (WAEC), National Examinations Council (NECO) and Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) as lamented by Nwaorgo (2012). Cases of examination malpractices have been reported over the years among many Benue State secondary school students and Zone B in particular due to lack of concentration likely caused by family violence. There is therefore the need to refocus on the possible ways which are glaring and seem to destabilize students' attention towards academic work in order to avoid mass failure in secondary schools. It is also pertinent to investigate these factors that constitute family violence and its consequent effect on students' performance.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of family violence on students' performance in secondary schools in Zone B of Benue State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the effect of physical violence on students' performance in secondary schools in Zone B of Benue State.
2. Ascertain the effect of psychological violence on students' performance in secondary schools.

## Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of physical violence on students' performance in secondary schools in Zone B of Benue State?
2. What is the effect of psychological violence on students' performance in secondary schools?

## Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant effect of physical violence on students' performance in secondary schools in Zone B of Benue State.
2. There is no significant effect of psychological violence on students' performance in secondary schools.

## Methodology

The researchers adopted descriptive survey research design. According to Emaikwu (2010), it is a design in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from a few people considered to be a representative sample of the entire population. This method was chosen by the researchers because it studies the situations in their natural settings without manipulation of variables. The population of the study comprised of 36,229 students from 84 secondary schools in 7 local government areas in Zone B of Benue State. A sample of 390 students drawn from the total population 36,229 students using simple random sample technique was used for the study. A 12-item "Family Violence and Students' Performance Questionnaire (FVSPQ)" was used for data collection. The questionnaire elicited respondents' opinion on the two variables of the study. The instrument was modeled on a 4-point rating scale designed with items weighted as Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). The questionnaire was validated by three experts, one in Social Studies Education, one in Measurement and Evaluation and the other from Mathematics in the Department of Curriculum and Teaching, Benue State University, Makurdi. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted on 12 item respondents in two secondary schools that were not part of the sample schools for the study. A reliability coefficient of .81 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha correlation coefficient which proved that the instrument was reliable for data collection for the study. This agrees with Emikwu (2010) who asserts that a reliability coefficient of .70 and above is considered adequate to use an instrument for field study. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer the two research questions. A mean cut-off point of 2.50 was used for decision making. The boundary limits of a mean response of 3.50-4.00 was considered Strongly Agree (SA), 2.50-3.49 to be Agree (A), 1.50-2.49 to be Disagree (D) and 1.00-1.49 to be Strongly Disagree (SD). The two hypotheses were tested using Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test of goodness of fit at .05 level of significance.

## Results and Findings

This section presented and discussed the results of the study.

### Research Question One

What is the effect of physical violence on students' performance in secondary schools in Zone B of Benue State?

**Table 1: Mean ratings and standard deviations on the effect of physical violence on students' performance in secondary schools in Zone B of Benue State.**

Item No	Item Description	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1.	Fighting among family members hinders students' concentration on their class work.	390	3.21	0.65	Agree
2.	Bullying among siblings creates fear in students which leads to poor class attendance.	390	3.48	0.77	Agree
3.	Children who are exposed to physical violence bully their mates in school thereby leading to various degrees of punishments at the expense of their academic work.	390	3.48	0.69	Agree
4.	Parents who torment their children create fear in them which leads to poor academic performance.	390	3.42	0.66	Agree
5.	Children who witness physical violence develop low self-esteem which affects their academic performance.	390	3.31	0.67	Agree
6.	Children who suffer physical injuries from home isolate themselves from school work.	390	3.11	0.89	Agree
<b>Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation</b>			<b>3.34</b>	<b>0.72</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Data presented on table 1 shows that the mean ratings of items 1-6 are 3.21, 3.48, 3.48, 3.42, 3.31 and 3.11 respectively with the corresponding standard deviation of 0.65, 0.77, 0.69, 0.66, 0.67 and 0.89. Based on the criteria for decision making, it means that all the mean ratings are above the cut-off point of 2.50. This means that the respondents agreed that fighting among family members hinders students' concentration on their class work. Bullying among siblings create fear in students which leads to poor class attendance. Children who are exposed to physical violence bully their mates in school thereby leading to various degrees of punishments at the expense of their academic work. Parents who torment their children create fear in hem which leads to poor academic performance. Children who witness physical violence develop low self-esteem which affects their academic performance and children who suffer physical injuries from isolate themselves from school work. The cluster mean of 3.34 with the standard deviation of 0.72 was also found to be above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies that physical violence has effect on performance of secondary school students in Zone B of Benue State.

**Research Question Two**

What is the effect of psychological violence on students' performance in secondary schools?

**Table 2: Mean ratings and standard deviations on the effect of psychological violence on students' performance in secondary schools.**

Item No	Item Description	N	X	SD	Decision
7.	Anxiety among family members reduces students' concentration on academic work.	390	3.40	0.65	Agree
8.	Quarrels among family members results in students' low interest in school work.	390	3.24	0.73	Agree
9.	Students who face harassment at home lose concentration in their academic work.	390	3.43	0.80	Agree
10.	Students who do not feel loved at home are not motivated to learn.	390	3.29	0.83	Agree
11.	Students who are not happy with their family conditions shy away from school activities.	390	3.38	0.73	Agree
12	Children who are constantly threatened at home develop phobia which affects their academic performance.	390	3.17	0.88	Agree
<b>Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation</b>			<b>3.32</b>	<b>0.77</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Data presented on table 2 shows that the mean ratings of item 7-12 are 3.40, 3.24, 3.43, 3.29, 3.38 and 3.17 respectively with the corresponding standard deviation of 0.65, 0.73, 0.80, 0.83, 0.73 and 0.88. Based on the criteria for decision making, it means that all the mean ratings are above the cut-off point of 2.50. This means that the respondents agreed that anxiety among family members reduces students' concentration on academic work. Quarrels among family members results in students' low interest in school work. Students who face harassment at home lose concentration in their academic work. Students who do not feel loved at home are not motivated to learn. Moreover, students who are not happy with their family conditions shy away from school activities and that, children who are constantly threatened at home develop phobia which affects their academic performance. The cluster mean of 3.32 with the standard deviation of 0.77 was also found to be above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies that psychological violence has effect on students' performance in secondary schools.

### Hypothesis One

There is no significant effect of physical violence on students' performance in secondary schools in Zone B of Benue State.

**Table 3: Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test of effect of physical violence on students' performance in secondary schools in Zone B of Benue State.**

Opinions	Observed frequency	Expected frequency	Df	Level of Sig.	X <sup>2</sup> -cal	X <sup>2</sup> -tab	Decision
No Effect	52	195	1	.05	248.50	3.84	Ho
Effect	338	195					Rejected

Table 3 shows that chi-square calculated value of 248.50 is greater than the chi-square table value of 3.84 checked at 1 degree of freedom and at .05 level of significance.

The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This implies that there is significant effect of physical violence on students' performance in secondary schools in Zone B of Benue State.

**Research Hypothesis One**

There is no significant effect of psychological violence on students' performance in secondary schools.

**Table 3: Chi-square (x<sup>2</sup>) test of effect of psychological violence on students' performance in secondary schools.**

Opinions	Observed frequency	Expected frequency	Df	Level of Sig.	X <sup>2</sup> -cal	X <sup>2</sup> -tab	Decision
No Effect	67	195	1	.05	210.17	3.84	Ho
Effect	323	195					Rejected

Table 3 shows that chi-square calculated value of 210.17 is greater than the chi-square table value of 3.84 checked at 1 degree of freedom and at .05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This implies that there is significant effect of psychological violence on students' performance in secondary schools.

**Discussion of Findings**

The first finding reveals a significant effect of physical violence on students' performance in secondary schools in Zone B of Benue State. This finding is in agreement with Adegoke and Oladeji (2008) who found that a significant relationship between family violence variables such as promiscuity, infidelity and physical assault of children in the family and performance of students in schools. The finding is also in line with Hamm (2006) whose finding indicated that a significant number of physical problems are associated with child physical violence. Violated children may have more difficulty with their performance, self-control, self-image and social relationships. This is because of the emotional trauma they experience which makes them unstable in mind to concentrate and study.

The second finding reveals a significant effect of psychological violence on students' performance in secondary schools. This finding is in line with Ugbouju (2010) who found that psychologically violent youths are poorly socialized and can perform low in their academic work. The finding also agree with Berta (2007) who confirms that behaviour problems of children that witness psychological violence include being aggressive and passive, refusal to go to school, lying to avoid confrontation, rigid defense, excessive attention seeking, bed wetting and night mares, reduced intelligence, competences, dependence and mood giving. In support of this finding, Buka, Stichik, Birdthistle and Earl (2001) posit that psychological problems associated with exposure to violence comprise one of the most direct threats to the developmental task of school adaptation and performance and that, deficits in attention regulation, language skills, and memory undermine the child's ability to accomplish the central requirements of school performance.

**Conclusion**

Based on the result of the study, it was concluded that family violence has significant negative effect on students' performance in secondary schools in Zone B of Benue State. This is evident in the analysis of the research questions and test of



hypotheses of this study. Therefore, efforts should be made to curtail the menace of family violence in our various homes in order to pave way for enhanced student performance in secondary schools.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended as follows:

1. School administrators should establish a close working relationship with specialized domestic abuse agencies such as Coalition on Violence against Women (COVAW), Thika Integration Centre (TIC) and the police with a view to protecting children from physical violence.
2. Pre-service and in-service capacity building of school guidance counselors should be prioritized by government and other partners on issues of psychological violence so as to minimize such experiences by students and ensure their better performance in schools.

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