

INCIDENCE OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE AS EXPRESSED BY SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN KWARA STATE

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Abstract

Emotional abuse unlike many other forms of violence is a non-physical attack that is common among school children. Emotional abuse is one that degrades self-worth and interferes with development and productivity of a child. This study therefore investigated incidence of emotional abuse as expressed by secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. The simple random sampling technique was adopted for the selection of 200 respondents that participated in the study. The instrument used for this study was a self-developed questionnaire titled "Incidence of Emotional Abuse Questionnaire" (IEAQ). The instrument possessed a reliability coefficient of 0.69 after being subjected to the test-re-test procedure. The instrument consisted of 15 items which elicited information from the randomly selected respondents. A research question and three null hypotheses were formulated and tested with descriptive and inferential (t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistics. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that secondary school students expressed having experienced a lot of emotional abuse such as name-calling, verbal intimidation, isolation, ignoring, and humiliation. Further results indicated that class level, gender and family type did not influence the views of the respondents. It was recommended that school authorities should periodically enlighten the teachers and other school staff members on how to avoid the use of emotional abuse on students. Also, Government and Non- Governmental Organizations should from time to time organize community counselling programmes to sensitize the teachers on the effects of emotional abuse.

Keywords: Emotional Abuse, Incidence, and Secondary School Students

Introduction

Emotional abuse unlike many other forms of violence is a non-physical attack that is common among school children. Emotional abuse impedes children's ability to express their own emotions clearly and to read others' emotions accurately. Emotional abuse is one that degrades self-worth and interferes with development and productivity of a child. According to Glaser (2002), emotional abuse can be defined as a relationship between a child and a caregiver, which is characterized by a consistent pattern of harmful interactions for the child without including acts of physical or sexual abuse. Secondary school children are likely to experience emotional abuse

in family and other social contexts, such as in their school. Emotional abuse in school has been applied to a range of verbal and non-verbal behaviours. Aluede (2004), conversely, a variety of terms have been used to describe the phenomenon. Emotional abuse can also be defined as a pattern of verbal and non-verbal behaviours that do not include any type of physical contact, between a student and a person, which results in emotional, social, cognitive and somatic consequences for the student's functioning and adjustment. Verbal abuse may include use of sarcasm, ridicule or denigrating statements, yelling, name-calling, insulting, mocking a student's appearance or disabilities and making negative comments about a child's family. Non-verbal abuse may include neglect such as ignoring the student and behaviours such as assigning homework to impose discipline and using punishment for not responding correctly to an exercise or question (McEachern, Aluede, & Kenny, 2008).

Emotional abuse by any significant in school may have detrimental outcomes on secondary school children's well-being, also emotional abuse by teachers or school personnel is associated with emotional and behavioural problems (Hyman & Perone, 1998; McEachern, Aluede & Kenny, 2008). It is also noted that emotional abuse may reduce children's self-worth and confidence (Twemlow & Fonagy, 2005). Aluede (2004), Shaffer, Yates and Egeland, (2009), Hart, Brassard, Binggeli and Davidson (2002) asserted that emotional abuse is the most devastating form of child abuse, because of its traumatic effects in the development of school children, and it underlies all types of child abuse, as a perpetrator of emotional abuse can abuse many victims at one particular moment or the other (Brassard & Donovan, 2006).

High incidence of emotional child abuse was reported from India, United States, Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Cyprus (Shumba, 2002; Kacker, Varadan & Kumar, 2007; Whitted & Dupper, 2008; Okoza, Aluede & Ojugo, 2011; Theoklitou, Kabitsis & Kabitsi, 2012). The study from India found that 47.9% of surveyed boys and 52.1% of girls had experienced emotional abuse in schools (Kacker, Varadan & Kumar, 2007). It is important to explore the issue of children abused by educators in educational settings. Al-Mahrous (1997) found that emotional abuse was very frequently reported by girls 78% in Bahrain, while a study from Iran showed that emotional abuse among schoolgirls was 49.8% (Sheikhhattari et.al, 2006).

It was found that teacher-student relationships have been associated with students' emotional, behavioural and cognitive outcomes (Gehlbach, Brinkworth, & Harris, 2012). However, positive teacher-student relationships contribute to students' well-being, negative aspects of these relationships may have unfavourable outcomes on their socio-emotional adjustment (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Skalicka, Stenseng, & Wichstrom, 2015). Identifying the school environment as secure and safe is important and teachers as the key elements of this environment may either foster a sense of security or create feelings of uncertainty in their students (Whitted & Dupper, 2008). According to McEvoy (2005), when the educators induce fear instead of respect, then they become a person that students constantly try to avoid or escape from. Students often experience more of emotional abuses or problems when they find themselves being trapped into an environment with no way out, such as an office or a classroom by an individual placed in a position of power like their teachers or school personnel.

Statement of the Problem

School environment is expected to be a place where effective teaching and learning process take place, also should be a place where emotional needs such as self-concept, belongingness, acceptance and students' self-esteem are to be met, but reverse is the case. Intimidation, threat, isolation and humiliation are some behaviours that inflict emotional abuse on students. Such behaviours do not only demoralize the trust that should include student relationships, but also degrade students' sense of connection with their school (McEachern et al., 2008). Philip (2018) noted that students who experience abuse with any school personnel especially by teachers reported feelings of isolation and alienation towards their schooling. Poor academic performance, disengagement from social activities and even drop-out are some of the negative consequences encountered by students that feel disconnected from their academic environment (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2010). Consequently, emotional abuse in school may contribute to students' social withdrawal and loss of connection with their school work, which in turn may result in school denial or even drop-out (McEachern et al., 2008).

Some studies have been carried out which are related to this study. Philip (2018) examined on resilience following emotional abuse by teachers' insights from cross-sectional study with Greek students. The study revealed that exposure of emotional abuse by teachers predicted behavioural problems in school students suggesting a negative effect of these experiences on psychological functioning. Okoza, Aluede and Ojugo (2011) worked on sex and class of secondary school students in experiencing emotional abuse by teachers in Edo State, Nigeria. The study revealed that male students were found to have suffered the following dimensions of emotional abuse: terrorization, isolation and verbal assault than their female counterparts. Similarly, it was found that senior students unlike their junior counterparts suffered more from emotional abuse dimensions of dominating and terrorizing. On the other hand, junior students experienced more emotional isolation than senior students. Annal and Abdullah (2012) also examined emotional abuse towards children by school teachers in Aden Governorate, Yemen: A cross-sectional study. The study revealed that younger children were more likely to experience emotional abuse unlike older children who were more likely to repute emotional and several abuses.

Emotional abuse in the school environment has been connected to a range of negative effects on school children's physical and psychological well-being. So therefore, the study aimed to assess the incidence of emotional abuse as expressed by secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis and associated factors. Also, it is expected that it will contribute to better understanding of emotional abuse in school setting in Nigeria as a developing country.

Research Question

What are the incidences of emotional abuse as expressed by secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference of incidence of emotional abuse as expressed by secondary school students on the basis of class level.
2. There is no significant difference of incidence of emotional abuse as expressed by secondary school students on the basis of gender.

3. There is no significant difference of incidence of emotional abuse as expressed by secondary school students on the basis of family type.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was a descriptive survey design. The population of this study consist of all secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis, while the sample size for this study was 200 respondents where purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents from the three local government areas in Ilorin Metropolis, they are: Ilorin East, Ilorin South and Ilorin West according to their population that is 100 respondents was selected from Ilorin East, 50 respondents from Ilorin South and 50 respondents from Ilorin West. The instrument used for this study was a self- developed questionnaire by the researchers which consisted of two (2) sections; section A elicited information on the respondents' demographic data while section B consisted of fifteen (15) emotional abuse Items for respondents to appropriately respond. The questionnaire was validated through experts in the field. The reliability of the instrument was tested using test-re-test method. The instrument possessed a reliability coefficient of 0.69. The inferential statistics adopted were t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) to analyze the data collected. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The results are presented in tables below:

Table 1:

Distribution of Respondents by Gender, Class Level and Family Type

Demographic Data	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	117	58.5
Female	83	41.5
Total	200	100.0
Class Level		
JSS Classes	69	34.5
SSS Classes	131	65.5
Total	200	100.0
Family		
Intact	173	86.5
Separate	15	7.5
Divorced	12	6.0
Total	200	100.0

Results on Table 1 show the distribution of respondents on the basis of gender, class level and family type. It is observed that 117(58.5%) of the respondents were male while 83(41.5%) were female. The results further disclosed that 69(34.5%) of the respondents were in JSS classes while 131(65.5%) were in SSS classes. The results on the distribution of respondents on the basis of family type showed that 173(86.5%) of the respondents were from intact home, 15(7.5%) were children from separated home while the parents of 12(6.0%) of the respondents were divorced.

RQ: What are the incidences of emotional abuse as expressed by secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis?

Table 2: Incidences of emotional abuse as expressed by secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis

S/N	Incidences of Emotional Abuse Include:	Mean	S.D	Rank
1	names-calling	2.56	.775	1 st
3	isolating from other students	2.18	.577	2 nd
4	ignoring my opinions	2.15	.624	3 rd
7	shouting at me in the public	2.09	.560	4 th
14	insulting my appearance	1.99	.516	5 th
2	verbal intimidation from my teachers	1.71	.938	6 th
8	embarrassment on my health issues	1.49	.856	7 th
5	humiliation by my teachers	1.48	.756	8 th
13	lying against me by my classmates	1.42	.765	9 th
10	embarrassing me of being poor	1.41	.804	10 th
12	rejecting my ideas by my friends	1.41	.797	10 th
11	destroying my belongings	1.39	.808	12 th
6	threat of expulsion from school	1.37	.724	13 th
9	domination by my classmates	1.34	.667	14 th
15	wrong allegation by my teachers	1.19	.464	15 th

- Reference Standard Mean = 2.50
- Mid-Mean= 1.67

The results on Table 2 show the Mean, S.D., and Rank Order analysis of the expressed incidences of emotional abuse by secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis. It is observed that items 1, 3 and 4 ranked top 3. Item 1 (names-calling) ranked 1st with the Mean score of 2.56 and the S.D of 0.775, followed by item 3 (isolating from other students) which ranked 2nd with the Mean score of 2.18 and the S.D of 0.577 while item 4 (ignoring my opinions) ranked 3rd with the Mean score of 2.15 and the S.D of 0.624. However, items 6, 9 and 15 ranked the least 3. Item 6 (threat of expulsion from school) ranked 13th with the Mean score of 1.37 and the S.D. of 0.724; followed by item 9 (dominating by my classmates) ranked 14th with the Mean score of 1.34 and S.D of 0.667 while item 15(wrong allegation by my teachers) ranked least with the Mean score of 1.19 and the 0.464. Since the Reference Standard Mean Score of 2.50 is greater than the Mid-Mean Score of 1.67, it can be inferred that emotional abuse is not prevalent among secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis.

Hypotheses Testing:

Hypothesis One: *There is no significant difference in the incidence of emotional abuse as expressed by secondary school students in Kwara state on the basis of gender.*

Table 3: Mean, SD and t-value on Incidence of Emotional Abuse based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
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Male	117	24.80	7.052				
Female	83	25.62	8.428	198	0.73	1.97	0.47

Table 3 shows that calculated t-value of 0.73 less than the critical t-value of 1.97 with a corresponding p-value of 0.47 which is greater than 0.05 alpha level of significance. Since p-value is greater than the alpha level, the null hypothesis is therefore not rejected. Hence, there is no significant difference in the incidence of emotional abuse as expressed by secondary school students in Kwara state on the basis of gender. This implies that male and female respondents were of the same exposure to emotional abuse.

Hypothesis Two: *There is no significant difference in the incidence of emotional abuse as expressed by secondary school students in Kwara state on the basis of class level.*

Table 4: Mean, SD and t-value on Incidence of Emotional Abuse based on Class Level.

Class Level	N	Mean	Std. Dev	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
JSS Class	69	26.57	8.824				
SSS Class	131	24.38	6.857	198	1.9	1.97	0.55

Table 4 shows that calculated t-value of 1.9 less than the critical t-value of 1.97 with a corresponding p-value of 0.55 which is greater than 0.05 alpha level of significance. Since p-value is greater than the alpha level, the null hypothesis is therefore not rejected. Hence, there is no significant difference in the incidence of emotional abuse as expressed by secondary school students in Kwara state on the basis of class level. This implies that students in junior and senior classes were having equal experiences of emotional abuse.

Hypothesis Three: *There is no significant difference in the incidence of emotional abuse as expressed by secondary school students in Kwara state on the basis of family type.*

Table 5: ANOVA table on Incidence of Emotional Abuse based of Family Type.

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	Calc. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	p-value
Between Group	4532.48	2	2266.2	62.96	3.04	.000
Within Group	7090.88	197	35.99			
Total	11623.36	199				

Data in table 5 indicate no significant difference in the incidence of emotional abuse as expressed by secondary school students in Kwara state on the basis of family type ($F_{2, 197} = 62.96, p < 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. However, Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) was carried out as a post hoc test in table 6 to ascertain the factor that contributed most to the incidence of emotional abuse.

Table 6: DMRT on factors of emotional abuse by family types

Family Type	N	Group	Mean	Duncan's Grouping
Intact	173	1	23.25	A
Divorce	12	2	37.17	B
*Separate	15	3	37.20	B

Results in table 6 indicated that all the groups differ in their expression on the incidence of emotional abuse, however, it can be inferred that respondents from separated family type contributed most to the variation noted in the ANOVA table.

Discussion

Table 1 shows the frequency distribution of demographic data of the incidence of emotional abuse as expressed by secondary school students in Kwara State based on gender, class level and family type. The first hypothesis indicated that there is no significant difference in the incidence of emotional abuse as expressed by secondary school students in Kwara State on the basis of gender, the result of the finding shown that both male and female students had equal experience of emotional abuse, this result is in support of Okoza, Aluede, & Ojugo (2011) who found out that both male and female students experienced emotional abuse dimensions of terrorizing, isolating, ignoring and verbal assaulting.

The second hypothesis indicated that there is no significant difference in the incidence of emotional abuse as expressed by secondary school students in Kwara State on the basis of class level. The result revealed that both junior and senior students are exposed to emotional abuse, this result is in agreement with Gesinde and Sanu (2013) who found out that junior and senior secondary school students reported all types of emotional abuse by their teachers. This result also agree with Okoza, Aluede, & Ojugo (2011) who also found out that senior secondary school students experienced dominating and terrorizing dimensions of emotional abuse while the junior counterparts also experienced isolation dimension of emotional abuse.

The third hypothesis indicated that there is no significant difference in the incidence of emotional abuse as expressed by secondary school students in Kwara State on the basis of family type. The result revealed that students suffered from emotional abuse. This result is supported by Gesinde (2011) who found out that adolescent suffered from emotional abuse dimension of isolation, degradation and exploitation from their parents and caregivers. Also, the results shown that students whose parents are separated suffered more from emotional abuse than students whose parents are intact or divorced. This result is supported by National Research Council (1993) reported that students exhibit aggressive/oppositional and hostile behaviours in school and also experienced more of emotional abuse as a result of separation or divorce than their counterparts from intact homes.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn: The expressed incidences of emotional abuse are names-calling; isolating from other students and ignoring my opinions among others. There is no significant difference in the incidence of emotional abuse as expressed by secondary school students in Kwara state on the basis of gender and class level

while a significant difference was found on the basis of family type. Emotional abuse is a form of abuse that can severely damage a person's self-worth and interferes with development and productivity of a child. Hence, the importance of building a healthy child. Counsellors, teachers and school authorities are to work hand in hand to help and counsel school children to resolve their emotional disturbances and become productive school children in the school and the society at large.

Recommendations

Based on the results and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were drawn:

1. Awareness programme such as workshops, seminars and conferences should be conducted by ministry of education for school authorities, teachers and students in order to enlighten them on dimensions of emotional abuse within the school context and incidences of emotional abuse on students, while this will go a long way in minimizing the prevalence of emotional abuse by teachers and other school personnel.
2. The school administration should also set up body to check the incidence of emotional abuse and possible control measures, school counsellors should always educate the school personnel, teachers and students on indication of emotional abuse on students.
3. Both teachers and other school personnel should develop verbal communication in the classroom and outside the classroom by adopting good skills in teaching, listening and overcoming barriers in verbal communication as they arise. In the case of school authorities, with the assistance of ministry of education seminars and workshops should be organized for teachers where they can learn how to develop parental skills for students in the school environment in order to develop positive relationships that are free from emotional abuse;
4. The teachers should not give room for gender discrepancies when dealing with students in the school.

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