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Research Article

Effect Of Parental Negligence on Adolescent Abuse Among Individuals Aged 12–18 Years in Ideato North, Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This research investigated the influence of parental neglect on teenage abuse among individuals aged 12–18 years in Ideato North, Imo State, Nigeria. A descriptive cross-sectional design was utilised, with a sample size of 370 respondents chosen by a multistage sampling process. Data were gathered using a standardised questionnaire and examined through descriptive statistics, chi-square test, and logistic regression. The results showed that child abuse is very common, with 58.1% of respondents saying they had been abused in some way. Neglect (50.5%) and mental abuse (45.7%) were the most common types, followed by physical abuse (35.1%) and sexual abuse (14.1%). A significant percentage of respondents reported experiencing moderate (43.2%) and high (31.9%) levels of parental neglect. Chi-square analysis revealed a substantial correlation between parental carelessness and child abuse ($\chi^2 = 19.84$, $p < 0.05$), whilst logistic regression demonstrated that parental negligence significantly forecasted child abuse ($OR = 2.37$, $p < 0.05$). The study also found that abuse had serious psychological (low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression), social (bad academic performance and relationship problems), and emotional (fear, loneliness, and rage) effects. The results show that parental neglect is a big reason why teens mistreat their children. The report suggests bolstering parental education, improving child protection policies, and executing community-based solutions.

Keywords: Parental neglect, child abuse, adolescents, Nigeria, mental health.

Introduction

Child abuse is still a big problem for public health and society around the world. It affects millions of kids in different parts of the world, especially in low- and middle-income nations where protective institutions are typically weak or underfunded. It includes several kinds of abuse, like physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as neglect. All of these can have a big impact on a child's growth and development [1]. Adolescents are particularly susceptible to these detrimental experiences owing to their transitional developmental phase, marked by heightened emotional sensitivity, identity formation, and reliance on parental supervision and support. At this stage, the role of parents or caregivers is critical in shaping behaviour, emotional stability, and overall wellbeing [2].

Parental neglect, characterised by the persistent inability to deliver sufficient emotional, physical, educational, and psychological care, is widely acknowledged as one of the most prevalent and detrimental kinds of child maltreatment. Neglect is frequently subtle and hard to see, yet its effects can be deep and endure a long time. Kids whose parents don't take care of them often don't get the fundamental things they need, such good food, medical treatment, supervision, and emotional support. This deprivation not only impacts their immediate welfare but also renders them susceptible to additional forms of abuse and exploitation.

In Nigeria, a number of socioeconomic and cultural variables have made parental neglect and child abuse more common.

Poverty, unemployment, and economic difficulty are widespread, which puts a lot of stress on families and makes it hard for parents to take good care of their children [5]. Also, family instability, such as single-parent homes, fights between married couples, and moving for work, might make it harder for teens to get the supervision and emotional support they need. In certain instances, cultural norms that condone severe disciplinary measures or downplay the significance of emotional care exacerbate the continuation of neglect and abuse [6].

The effects of parental carelessness on teenagers are extensive and multifaceted. Neglected children are more prone to have mental health problems like anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and other issues. These disorders may endure until maturity, impairing their capacity to establish healthy relationships and operate effectively within society [7]. Academically, insufficient parental support and supervision can result in subpar academic performance, diminished motivation, and an elevated likelihood of school dropout. Adolescents who are impacted may show signs of withdrawal, hostility, or delinquent behaviour, which might make them even more vulnerable [8].

Even though more people in Nigeria are aware of child abuse and neglect, there is still a big gap in research, especially in rural and semi-urban areas like Ideato North in Imo State. Numerous instances of abuse in these regions remain unreported owing to stigma, insufficient awareness, and restricted access to reporting channels and support services. Consequently, there is inadequate data to guide focused actions and policy formulation [9].

This study aims to investigate the influence of parental carelessness on teenage abuse among individuals aged 12–18 years in Ideato North, Imo State. The study seeks to furnish empirical evidence regarding the prevalence, patterns, and repercussions of parental negligence and child abuse, thereby contributing to the formulation of effective, context-specific strategies for prevention, intervention, and policy development aimed at protecting adolescent wellbeing.

Materials and Methods

Study Design

A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was employed.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Ideato North Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria, a semi-urban and rural community with access to educational and healthcare facilities.

Study Population

The target population comprised adolescents aged 12–18 years, estimated at 5,000.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 370 was determined using the Taro Yamane

formula. A multistage sampling technique was used to select participants across communities and schools.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained, and informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity were ensured.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire divided into four sections: demographic information, parental negligence, prevalence of abuse, and effects of abuse.

Validity and Reliability

The instrument was validated by experts and pre-tested among adolescents in a neighboring community to ensure reliability.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, chi-square test, and logistic regression. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Results

Child Abuse Experience	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes (Experienced abuse)	215	58.1
No (No abuse)	155	41.9
Total	370	100.0

Table 1: Prevalence of Child Abuse among Respondents (n = 370)

Type of Abuse	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Physical abuse	130	35.1
Emotional abuse	169	45.7
Sexual abuse	52	14.1
Neglect (basic needs deprivation)	187	50.5

Table 2: Types of Child Abuse Experienced (Multiple Responses Allowed)

Level of Parental Negligence	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	92	24.9
Moderate	160	43.2
High	118	31.9
Total	370	100.0

Table 3: Level of Parental Negligence among Respondents

Variable	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Remark
Parental Negligence vs Child Abuse	19.84	2	0.000	Significant

Table 4: Relationship between Parental Negligence and Child Abuse (Chi-Square Test)

Variable	B	S.E	Odds Ratio (Exp B)	p-value	Remark
Parental Negligence	0.865	0.168	2.37	0.000	Significant

Table 5: Logistic Regression Analysis Showing Parental Negligence as Predictor of Child Abuse

Psychological Effect	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Depression	150	40.5
Anxiety	165	44.6
Low self-esteem	181	48.9
Aggressive behavior	132	35.7

Table 6: Psychological Effects of Child Abuse

Social Effect	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Poor academic performance	162	43.8
Social withdrawal	143	38.6
Delinquent behavior	105	28.4
Difficulty in relationships	152	41.1

Table 7: Social Effects of Child Abuse

Emotional Effect	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Fear	174	47.0
Anger	158	42.7
Shame/Guilt	146	39.5
Loneliness	168	45.4

Table 8: Emotional Effects of Child Abuse

Discussion

The study showed that many teenagers had been abused as children, which means that a lot of young people in the study area had been through one or more types of abuse. This study aligns with global reports indicating that child abuse remains prevalent, especially in resource-constrained environments characterised by economic difficulties, fragile social support systems, and insufficient child protection measures. The high prevalence identified shows the seriousness of the

issue and highlights the urgent need for tailored interventions to address child maltreatment at both community and institutional levels [11].

A significant conclusion of this study is the prevalence of neglect and emotional abuse compared to physical and sexual abuse. This pattern shows how important non-physical types of abuse are. These forms of abuse are often less visible, so carers, teachers, and even policymakers often miss them. Neglect, which is not meeting a child's basic physical and emotional requirements, takes away the support they need to grow up healthy. Emotional abuse, which includes insults, rejection, humiliation, and a lack of affection, can also seriously hurt a child's self-esteem and emotional stability. These types of abuse may not leave apparent physical scars, but they can have a big effect on mental health, cognitive development, and emotional regulation in the long run.

The research demonstrated a statistically significant correlation between parental neglect and child abuse, affirming that insufficient parental care is a substantial risk factor for maltreatment. This research indicates that children raised in circumstances where their needs are perpetually unsatisfied are at a heightened risk of experiencing maltreatment. The logistic regression result, which showed that neglected children are more than twice as likely to be abused, shows how important the family environment is for keeping children safe. It underscores that parental conduct, attitudes, and degree of participation directly affect the safety and welfare of children. When parents cannot or choose not to give sufficient care, children may encounter detrimental events both within and beyond the home [13].

The ramifications of these findings beyond the immediate experience of abuse, as the study also revealed considerable psychological, social, and emotional repercussions among the affected teenagers. Many victims reported low self-esteem, anxiety, and sadness, showing that abuse can have a big impact on mental health and emotional growth. These circumstances could make it harder for a teenager to deal with stress, make choices, and feel good about themselves. The study revealed that abused children frequently encounter challenges in establishing and sustaining relationships, in addition to exhibiting subpar academic performance. These results may stem from diminished focus, emotional turmoil, and decreased motivation, all of which adversely affect school achievement and future prospects [14].

The high levels of dread, loneliness, anger, and feelings of shame or guilt among the responders show how deeply abuse may hurt people emotionally. These emotional reactions might cause victims to retreat, become aggressive, or stay quiet, which makes it hard for them to get help or talk about what happened. If not addressed, these impacts can endure throughout adulthood, leading to chronic mental health illnesses, dysfunctional relationships, and diminished quality of life [15].

The results of this study corroborate current literature re-

garding the harmful effects of child maltreatment and the pivotal role of parental neglect as a contributing factor. They stress the importance of finding, helping, and keeping support systems in place early on to lessen the long-term effects of abuse and encourage healthy growth in teens [16].

Conclusion

Parental neglect significantly contributes to teenage abuse in Ideato North. It makes people much more likely to be abused and causes bad mental, social, and emotional effects. To solve this problem, families, schools, healthcare providers, and governments all need to work together.

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