PARENTAL PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDE TO CHILDREN'S VIOLENT ACTS IN IFE CENTRAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA SECONDARY SCHOOLS

OJO, (Mrs) Olubukola O., PhD
email: oojo@oauife.edu.ng;
bukyojo68@yahoo.com

AKINTOMIDE, Akinjide G.
&
OMOYEMIJU, Michael A.
Department of Educational Foundations and Counselling
Faculty of Education
Obafemi Awolowo University
Ile-Ife, Nigeria

Abstract
This study identified among others , the level of parental awareness of the violent acts, actions parents will take when their children perpetrate violence and how violent acts can be solved in school. 50 children from 10 senior secondary schools 1 to 3 were chosen randomly and asked to give the questionnaire to their parents in the survey. The results reveal that parents are aware of violent acts that occur in schools and some of the causes are poor supervision by school authorities (82%), peer influence (82.8%), exposure to violent films (85.2%) and emotional instability (79.8%). Children that will report violence to their parents are 84% while 61.4% believed that their children will report to them if they perpetrate violence in schools. Furthermore, 65% of parents would go to schools to approach any child perpetrating violence against their children while 53.8% would go and report to the teacher. In addition (26.2%) would still ask their children to go back to school to retaliate. Opportunity for sports and other recreational activities, games, debate, excursions, club activities, visitation to schools by parents, establishment of Guidance and Counselling units are some of the strategies suggested for solving violent behaviour of children in schools.

Key Words: School violence, parents and violence, strategies for curbing violence

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO; 2002) defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation. Olweus (1999) also confined violence to the use of physical force. He defined violence or violent behaviour as aggressive behaviour where the actor or perpetrator uses his or her own body as an object (including a weapon) to inflict (relatively serious) injury or discomfort upon an individual. According to Blackburn (1993) violence denotes the 'forceful infliction of physical injury'. Violence has been defined in a broader sense to include behaviour by people or against people liable to cause physical or psychological harm (Gulbenkian Foundation, 1995). All the definitions given associate intentionality with the committing of the act itself, irrespective of the outcome it produces. Excluded from the definition are unintentional incidents – such as most road traffic injuries and burns (WHO, 2002).

School violence wears many faces. It includes gang activity, locker thefts, bullying and intimidation, gun use, assault—just about anything that produces a victim. Violence is perpetrated against students, teachers, and staff, and ranges from intentional vendettas to accidental killings of bystanders. Research has shown that a significant relationship exists between exposure to community violence and increases in aggressive behaviour in adolescent youth (Cooley, Turner, & Beidel, 1995; Bell & Jenkins, 1993). Exposure to community violence occurs through various modalities that include the media, observation, hearsay, and direct contact either as perpetrator or victim (Schubiner, Scott & Tzelepis, 1993). Furthermore, the degree to which adolescents are exposed to violence in their homes, neighbourhoods, and schools and the extent to which they have been victims of violence are associated with their own use of violence (Durant, Pendergrast, and Cadenhead, 1994). There is extensive evidence that many adolescents are exposed to high levels of violence and that this exposure is having a significant effect on the increasing violent trends found among this age group.

Despite the fact that children spend most of their after school hours with parents, report has shown that most children will not report cases of violence at home (Unicef, 2007). No parent wants their child to live in fear of intimidation or harm. Except for extreme cases that are reported, violence incidences against children are not documented.

Children may not feel able to report acts of violence for the fear of further subjection to punishment by the abuser. Most times both child and abuser may see nothing unusual or wrong in the child being subjected to violence. They may not consider an act of violence actually to be violence at all, perhaps viewing it as justifiable and necessary punishment. The child victim may feel ashamed or guilty, believing that the violence was deserved. This often leads the child to be unwilling to speak about it.

This lack of documentation and increasing violence rates against children were part of the reasons for the global in-depth study of violence against children by the UN Secretary General as directed by the General Assembly Resolution 57/90 of 2002 to provide a global picture. The report provided information that various types of violence exist against children within the family, schools, alternative care, institutions, detention facilities, places where children work and communities. Other studies reveal that violence exists in every country of the world and it cuts across culture, class, education, income and ethnic origin (Felitti, Anda, Nordenberg, Williamson, Spitz, Edwards, Koss, Marks 1998; Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi and Lozano 2002; Reza, Mercy and Krug 2002; Curie, Molcho, Boyce, Holstein, Torsheim and Richter 2004; WHO 2006). As documented by Unicef 2007, reporting violence among learners is generally low, ranging from 4% for sexual violence to 40% in the case of physical violence. Most learners will report cases of physical violence to school teachers (45.1%) and also the head teacher (34.5%). Some of the major reasons why learners will not report cases of violence especially for physical and gender based violence were because they felt nothing will be done. Improving the quality of education is difficult without also addressing school violence, since regardless of how good the teachers or curriculum are, violence makes it difficult for students to learn. Children who are victimized in school crime often suffer from decreased self-esteem, truancy, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and in extreme cases, suicide and violent retaliation.

In situations where parents finally become aware of violent acts against or of their children, they react differently. Some parents might take their children to martial arts college in desperation because they are being bullied. Most parents speak to their child's teachers or the bully's parents but often this doesn't solve the problem. Many parents also want their child to fight back but the child is afraid of the bully and also of what the teacher will do if they fight back. In some cases things have gotten so bad that kids actually take their own lives. For instance African American adolescents view fighting back as a means to decrease their

vulnerability to acts of violence (Kaljee, Stanton., Ricardo, & Whitehead,. (1995).

Based on all these views this study intends to find out the attitude of parents to children violent acts in schools.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to
1. Determine types of violent acts common to secondary school students
2. Find out parental awareness on children's violent acts in schools
3. Determine parental attitude to children's violent acts in schools.

In investigating the objectives above, the following research questions are raised

Research Questions

1. What are the types of violent acts common to secondary school students?
2. What are the common causes of violent acts of students in secondary school?
3. What is the level of parental awareness of children violent acts in school?
4. What action will parents take when their children perpetrate violent acts?
5. What are parental views on how violent acts can be solved in school?

Methods

A survey research design was used in this study. The population for this study comprise of all parents in Ife Central Local government Area of Osun state. The parents were reached through their children. 50 children were chosen randomly from 10 public schools in the local government making a sample size of 500. Simple random sampling technique was employed in the selection of the 10 schools out of the 14 public schools in the local government area. The rationale for undertaking the study in Ife central local government was because of past history of violence associated with the area as a result of the past inter communal clashes between the two communities inhabiting the area few years ago. The questionnaire used in the study was tagged parents' attitude to children violent acts. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section A

consists of personal data of the respondents. Section B and C consists of items on parents' attitude to children violent acts and how children violent acts can be solved in schools. The face, construct and content validity of the instrument was determined by giving it to experts in education, tests and measurement. The reviews by the experts were incorporated. The reliability of the instrument was determined using test retest method. A reliability coefficient of 0.73 was obtained and deemed adequate for data collection. The questionnaires were then given to students to take home to their parents for their responses. Students were cautioned on attempting to complete the questionnaire themselves. Items in the questionnaire were close ended questions, with two options of Agree and Disagree. These were scored 2 and 1 respectively for all items in the questionnaire. Data collected was analysed using simple percentages.

Results
Research Question 1: What are the types of violent acts common to secondary school students?

Table 1:   Percentile table showing types of violent acts common to senior secondary school students

Items	Agree	%	Disagree	%
Stealing	387	77.4	113	26.6
Fighting	387	77.4	113	26.6
Damaging of school properties	416	83.2	84	16.8
Shooting with Guns	295	59	205	41
Seizing other students' food	145	29	175	35
Bullying other Children	311	62.2	189	37.8
Rape	284	56.8	216	43.2
Abuses	317	63.4	183	36.6
Blackmailing	352	70.4	148	29.6
Extortion	262	52.4	238	47.6
Stigmatisation	220	44	216	43.2

From the Table 1, damaging of school properties (83.2%), fighting (77.4%), stealing (77.4%) and blackmailing (70.4%) have the highest percentage in children violent acts in secondary schools. Worthy of attention is also abuses (63.4%), bullying (62.2%) and shooting with guns

(59%). The fact that shooting with gun is also identified point to the fact that the communal war in the past might have influenced the types of violence occurring in the area and it calls for attention.

Research Question 2: What are the common causes of violent acts of students in secondary schools?

Table 2:   Common causes of children violent acts

Items	Agree	%	Disagree	%
Poor supervision by school authorities	410	82	90	18
Peer group Influence	414	82.8	86	17.2
Lack of interest in School	172	34.4	148	29.6
Students dislike of teachers	297	59.4	203	40.6
Teachers attitude to work	285	57	215	43
Home background of students	253	50.6	247	49.4
Parental Influence	272	54.4	228	45.6
Emotional instability	399	79.8	101	20.2
Exposure to violent films	426	85.2	74	14.8
Lack of recreational facilities	307	61.4	193	38.6
Strike actions of teachers	300	60	200	40
Too many free periods	238	47.6	262	52.4
Absence of teachers from classrooms	258	51.6	242	48.4

Data analysed revealed that many things do cause violent behaviour in children among which are poor supervision by school authorities (82%), peer influence (82.8%), exposure to violent films (85.2%) and emotional instability (79.8%) just to mention a few.

Research Question 3: What is the level of parental awareness of children violent acts in schools?

From the Table 3, 84% of the parents reported that their children will report to them if they were victims of violence. Meanwhile a lesser percentage 61.4% believed that their children will report to them if they perpetrate violence in schools. It is however interesting that 89.8% of the parents believed that their children will tell them if they perpetrate violence in schools.

Table 3:   Parental awareness of children violent acts in schools

Items	Yes (Total number)	%	No (total number)	%
Do your children report to you whenever they are victims of violence	420	84	80	16
Do your Children report to you whenever they perpetrate violence in schools	307	61.4	193	38.6
If they perpetrate violence do you think they will tell you?	449	89.8	51	10.2

Table 4: Parental Method of dealing with Child's experience of Violent acts in school

What did you do when your child reported that they were victims of violence in school	Yes (total no)	%	No (total no)	%
1. Visit the school to accost the child Involved	325	65	175	35
2. See the school authority or teacher to find out what happened	269	53.8	231	46.2
3. Send the child back to school to go and retaliate	131	26.2	369	73.8

It is also revealed from the Table 4 that in dealing with cases of violence involving their children, parents would go to schools to approach the child involved (65%) or see the teacher (53.8%) rather than sending their children to go back to school to retaliate. It is noteworthy however that few parents (26.2%) would still ask their children to go back to school to retaliate.

Table 5:   Percentile distribution of parental action when their children perpetrate violent acts

What will you do if your child reports that he/she perpetrated violence in school	Yes (total no)	%	No (total no)	%
1. Visit the school to beg the child Involved	318	63.6	182	36.4
2. See the school authority or teacher to report	384	76.8	116	23.2
3. Discipline my child at home	472	94.4	28	5.6

The Table 5 showed that most parents will discipline their child at home (94.4%) rather than go to school to apologise to the child involved or see the school authority to report. Though some parents will still go to school to report to the authority or beg the child involved

Table 6:   Percentile distribution on parental view of how violent acts can be solved in school

Items	Agree	%	Disagree	%
Establishment of more welfare centres to correct violent behaviour	471	94.2	29	5.8
Parents should provide basic needs for their children	451	90.2	49	9.8
More time given to sports and other recreational activities on the curriculum	457	91.4	43	8.6
Games, debate, excursions and club activities should be encouraged	403	91.4	97	19.4
Parents should visit the school of their children from time to time to know their behaviour	361	72.2	101	20.4
Guidance and counselling units should be established to help students with behavioural problems	255	51.1	208	41.9

Table 6 showed that establishment of more welfare centres to correct violent behaviour, the provision of basic needs for children, opportunity for sports and other recreational activities, games, debate, excursions, club activities, visitation to schools by parents, establishment

of Guidance and Counselling units are some of the strategies suggested for solving violence behaviour of children in schools.

Discussion

The findings of this study showed that parents of children in Ife central local government area are aware of violent acts that occur and are common in their children's schools. They might have been told by the school authorities or the children themselves. This is not determined however in this study but one way or the other they get to know meanwhile this finding differ from the documentation in literature that most violent acts are not reported. It is also observed from the data analysed that some parents, about 50%, feel that home background of students and parental influence are not causes of some of the violent acts of school children. Meanwhile a larger percentage (85.2%) believe that exposure to violent films is. This finding also tally with literature evidence that there is consistent evidence that violent imagery in television, film and video, and computer games has substantial short-term effects on arousal, thoughts, and emotions, increasing the likelihood of aggressive or fearful behaviour in younger children, especially in boys (Brown and Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2005). Reviews of literature typically conclude that there is evidence that viewing violent media is associated with aggression (e.g., Donnerstein & Linz, 1995; Huesmann & Miller, 1994; Paik & Comstock, 1994; Wood, Wong, & Chachere, 1991). The question then is 'where do the children watch the violent films? In homes of course but it was not established whether they watch it in the presence of their parents.

The issue of shooting guns as one of the violent acts common in the area might be as a result of previous communal clashes that occurred between the two predominant communities in the area. This finding is also established in literature by Durant, Getts, Cadenhead, & Woods (1995) that the weapon carrying behaviours of young children who use violence to resolve conflicts is significantly associated with previous exposure to violence and victimization. In their study, 225 African-American adolescents living in or around nine HUD Public housing communities in Augusta, Georgia completed a survey that examined the social and psychological factors associated with the frequency of weapon carrying behaviours. They found weapon carrying to be significantly associated with previous exposure to violence and victimization. A study by Durant, Getts, Cadenhead & Woods (1995) found adolescent weapon carrying to be associated with depression and low self-esteem. Garrett

(1995) described frustration and loss of hope as being a major reason why some African-American males resort to violence. Furthermore, Garrett considered violent behaviours among African American males to be an expression of frustration over prejudice and the bleak view of the future. The effects of these factors can be devastating.

This study has also revealed that most parents will go to school to see the person involved in perpetrating violence against their children contrary to some beliefs that parents will send a child who had been a victim of violence back to school to retaliate. It is common knowledge that among the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria, it is a trait of cowardice for children to come home to report that they were victims of violence they will rather endure it or face being sent back to retaliate. It is also reported that this vengeful attitude has been carried over for generations in many African-American families. This is evident by some parents telling their children to hit back if someone hits them. The fear was that if a child didn't fight back then he or she would continue to be picked on by bullies (Carr, 2004). This causes several problems in that it teaches youth to use violence when faced with a conflict.

Furthermore, the study has shown the protective nature of parents because if their child perpetrates violence they will discipline such child at home rather than go to school to report their children, they will prefer to discipline their children themselves. As a Yoruba proverb says 'Help me to beat my child is not totally pleasing to parents'. It means parents really don't like others to discipline their children for them. Summarily perceived parental attitudes toward violence may be an important factor in youth developing attitudes of resiliency towards violence.

Conclusion and Recommendations
This study has revealed the perception of parents to the types and causes of violent behaviour in children. It has also shown their attitude to their children being victims or perpetrators of acts of violence. From the study it is obvious that more of the causes of violence are attributed to factors outside the home and parents believed so much in their children that they will tell them if they perpetrate violence in schools. Meanwhile the lack of skills to resolve conflicts in an appropriate manner is considered to be a major precursor to violent behaviour (Dahlberg, 1998) therefore parents need information that children's adoption of a violence free attitude both at school and at home is not negotiable.   In many instances when individuals are faced with various life stressors and do not have the

112

means to resolve the conflict it may often lead to an act of violence against oneself or others. For youth this is a particularly important issue. Therefore parents should look into all these factors to assist youth overcome being victims or being perpetrators of violence.

The parents' suggestion that establishment of more welfare centres to correct violent behaviour, the provision of basic needs for children, opportunity for sports and other recreational activities, games, debate, excursions, club activities, visitation to schools by parents, establishment of Guidance and Counselling units should be adopted as some of the strategies for solving violence behaviour of children in schools is in line with suggested strategies in literature. Some of the strategies in literature are conflict resolution, peer mediation, rites of passage, and psychotherapeutic interventions (embedded in guidance and counselling). According to Fujimoto 1987, effort to prevent school violence should focus on improving school facilities and environment, tailoring education to the personalities and needs of the student, improved discipline, and emphasis on teachers' role in providing guidance to students. Prevention also must focus on improving conditions in the family through re-education aimed at improving family-juvenile relations. Improved family-school relations also are needed. Finally, communities must organize delinquency prevention programs, and liaisons must be established among schools, families, and communities. Other protective mechanisms were identified by Floyd, 1997 that supportive, nurturing family, Interactions with supportive adults, personality traits of perseverance and optimism should be encouraged or modelled to youths. Myers & Taylor 1995 also suggested acquiring social support. All these will help prevent violence among children

References

Bell, C. C., & Jenkins, E. J. (1993). Community violence and children on Chicago's Southside. Psychiatry, 56, 46-53.

Blackburn, R. (1993) *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Browne, K. D, Hamilton-Giachritsis, C. (2005): The influence of violent media on children and adolescents: a public-health approach. Lancet 2005; 365: 702–10

Carr, J. L. (2004): Assessing Attitudes Towards Violence Among African American Male Youth: The Influence of Ecological Factors. A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of North Carolina State

University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science Psychology. Raleigh. Accessed online 30/8/2011 at http://ksu.edu.sa/sites/KSUArabic/Research/ncys/Documents /r351.pdf

Cooley, M. R., Turner, S. M., & Beidel, D. C. (1995). Assessing community violence: The children's report of exposure to violence. *Journal of American Child Adolescent Psychiatry, 34*(2), 201-207.

Currie, C.; Molcho, M., Boyce, W.; Holstein, B.; Torsheim, T; and Richter, M. 2004. *Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC) Study.* International Report from 2001/2002 Survey. Health Policy for Children and Adolescents, No 4, Geneva, Switzerland, WHO.

Dahlberg, L.L. (1998). Youth violence in the United States: Major trends, risk factors, and prevention approaches. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 14*(4), 259-272.

Donnerstein, E., & Linz, D. (1995). The media. In J. Q. Wilson, & J. Petersilia (Eds.), Crime (pp. 237–266). San Francisco, CA: Institute for Contemporary Studies Press.

Durant, R. H., Getts, A.G., Cadenhead, C., & Woods, E. (1995). The association between weapon-carrying and the use of violence among adolescents living in or around public housing. *Journal of Adolescence, 18,* 579-592.

Durant, R. H., Pendergrast, R. A., & Cadenhead, C. (1994). Exposure to violence and victimization and fighting behaviour by urban black adolescents. Journal of Adolescent Health, 15, 311-318.

Felitti V. J, Anda R. F, Nordenberg D, Williamson D. F, Spitz A. M, Edwards V, Koss M. P, Marks J.S 1998. Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to many of he leading causes of death in adults. The Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Study. *America Journal of Preventive Medicine,* Vol. 14, pp 245 - 258

Fujimoto, T. (1987). Problems of Juveniles in schools in Japan. Lay panel Magazine, volume 18. Accessed online on 31/8/2011 at https://www.ncjrs.gov/App/publicatons/ Abstract.aspx?id=112298

Gulbenkian Foundation 1995 Gulbenkian Foundation. 1995. *Children and violence*. London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Huesmann, L. R., & Miller, L. S. (1994). Long-term effects of repeated exposure to media violence in childhood. In L. R. Huesmann (Ed.),

Aggressive behaviour: Current perspectives (pp. 153–186). New York: Plenum Press.

Kaljee, L. M., Stanton, B., Ricardo, I., & Whitehead, T. (1995). Urban African-American adolescents and their parents perceptions of violence within and against their communities. *Human Organization, 54(4)*, 373-381.

Krug E., L. L. Dahlberg, J. A. Mercy, A. B. Zwi and R. Lozano (eds) (2002) World Report on Violence and Health. Geneva: World Health Organization. Available at: http://www.who.int/ violence_injury _prevention/violence/world_report/en/.

Myers, H. F., & Taylor, S. (1995). Family contributions to risk and resilience in African American children. Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 29(1), 215-229.

Olweus, D. (1999). Norway. In P. K. Smith, Y. Morita, J. Junger-Tas, D. Olweus, R. Catalano, & P. Slee (Eds.), *The nature of school bullying: A cross-national perspective* (pp. 7–27). London: Rutledge.

Paik, H., & Comstock, G. (1994). The effects of television violence on antisocial behaviour: A meta-analysis. Communications Research, 21(4), 516–546.

Reza, A., Mercy, J. A. & Krug E. G. (2002) Epidemiology of Violent deaths in World, Injury Prevention. Vol. 7 pp 104 – 111; Krug, op. cit. at note 1, pp 59 – 86.

Schubiner, H., Scott, R., & Tzelepis, A. (1993). Exposure to violence among inner city youth. Journal of Adolescent Health, 14, 214-219.

Wood, W., Wong, F., & Chachere, J. G. (1991). Effects of media violence on viewers' aggression in unconstrained social interaction. Psychological Bulletin, 109, 371–383.

World Health Organization, Geneva, 2002. Prevention of violence: a public health priority. Resolution WHA49.25. In: *World report on violence and health*: a summary.

Unicef 2007: Final Report on Violence in Basic Education. Unicef Nigeria

Unicef 2011: Adolescence An Age of Opportunity. The State of the World Children. Unicef