



# Influence of Child Abuse on Pupils' Academic Performance in Makurdi Metropolis: A Case of Selected Public Primary Schools

Yakubu, Meremu (PhD)<sup>1</sup>, Idoko Boniface Idoko PhD<sup>2</sup> & Hafsat, Bello Afolabi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UBE Girls Junior Secondary School, Makurdi  
[Lamimero@gmail.com](mailto:Lamimero@gmail.com), 08068169597

<sup>2</sup> Emmanuel Secondary School, Ugbokolo  
[frebonny@yahoo.com](mailto:frebonny@yahoo.com), 07035154200

<sup>3</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Gate, House no. 1, Federal low cost housing, North bank Makurdi  
[Iamosun1@gmail.com](mailto:Iamosun1@gmail.com) 08035721986

<http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4759242>

## Abstract

*This study investigated the influence of child abuse on pupils' academic performance. Academic performance is considered as one of the individual's basis to a successful career in the future. The study adopted quantitative approach using survey design. The purpose of the study was to ascertain the influence of child abuse on pupils' academic performance in Makurdi Metropolis. The study sampled 150 pupils drawn from five selected Public Primary Schools in Makurdi Metropolis. The instrument used for the study was questionnaire titled "Child Abuse and Academic Performance Questionnaire" (CAPQ) developed by the researchers and used for data collection. The instrument consists of 10 items on variables of physical and emotional abuse on a four-point modified Likert rating scale. The study was guided by two research questions. Two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 significance. The descriptive statistics of mean was used to answer the research questions while the Chi-Square was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 significance. The findings of the study revealed that physical and emotional abuses have statistical significant relationship with pupils' academic performance. The study recommended that school counsellor should be employed to assist pupils cope with child abuse in the school environment and beyond.*

**Key words:** Academic Performance, Child Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Physical Abuse, Pupils

## Introduction

The role schools play as agents of socialization is to inculcate the right knowledge, attitude, values and skills to learners. However, the level at which each pupil performs in school especially within the classroom differs. Anderson (2007) defined academic performance as the level of attainment an individual acquires on a given learning task under uniform teaching and learning conditions. Okorie (2014) defined academic performance as the ability to study and remember facts and being able to communicate one's

knowledge verbally or written on paper. Academic performance, therefore, can be defined as what learners have grasped after their exposure to teaching and learning as well as extra-curricular activities within the school.

Learners' performance could be influenced by a host of factors outside the classroom, including home environments (Ramez, Widom, Browne, Fergusson, Webb & Sinow 2009). This is to say that positive home environments may enrich children's school experiences, while negative environments could have detrimental influence on both learners' academic performance and classroom behaviours. This means that pupils' home environment, either positive or negative, could have bearing on their academic performance. According to Ramez et al (2009), the most devastating of the environmental factors is child abuse.

Child abuse refers to any condition injurious to physical or emotional health that is inflicted by parents, guardian or other caretakers (Obekpa, 2001). According to Taylor and Steward (2011), child abuse is any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation; or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm. McCoy and Keen (2013) view child abuse as action or inaction of parent or caregiver that causes injury, death, emotional harm or risk of serious harm to a child. Child abuse, therefore, can be defined as any act, either deliberate or not, taken by parents or guardians that can lead to loss of life, physical or psychological torture, sexual molestation and others to an innocent child.

The alarming rate of child abuse in our contemporary time is a thing of concern to the researchers as parents and educationists. However, in Africa societies such as Nigeria, children have roles to play in the survival of their families; they farm, and hawk goods, cook, wash and engage in other house chores. In the view of Onyango (2013), children always work in the traditional African societies and that the notion of child abuse as a social problem, is a recent development. Nonetheless, child abuse is not peculiar to Nigeria or the study area. According to UNICEF (2013), every year more than 3 million reports of child abuse were reported in America.

There are different forms of child abuse ranging from physical, sexual, emotional, mental and neglect (Crosson, 2008). Physical abuse in the context of this study means any touch on the child's body such as pushing, hitting, beating and others which might result in an injury. Emotional abuse refers to the use of abusive words such as bastard, good for nothing, blocked head, constant condemnation by parent or caregiver which might be capable of causing the child serious cognitive, mental or behavioural disorders. Emotional abuse means constantly blaming the child, belittling or berating the child, being unconcerned about the child's welfare and overtly rejection of the child by parents or caretakers or caregivers (Mba, 2003).

Child abuse has become a global problem and it has been established that many children in the developed world, especially in America, are abused annually. This has extended to African countries like Nigeria (UNICEF, 2012). The researchers observed that most children in Makurdi metropolis are being used by parents/guardians in hawking goods like groundnuts, oranges, mangoes among others on the streets during school hours instead of being in school. Some of these children are seen looking pale, exhausted with scars on their bodies resulting from beatings meted on them by parents /guardians.

However, violation of children's rights in form of child abuse is under-reported and under-punished; this leads to high prevalence of child abuse. More so, the researchers observed that -studies have not been carried out on child abuse and academic performance in the public primary schools in the study area. Hence, this study is aimed at filling this research gap and specifically physical and emotional abuses on academic performance were considered.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to determine the influence of child abuse on pupils' academic performance in public primary schools in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State. Specifically, the study sought to determine;

1. Influence of physical abuse on pupils' academic performance.
2. Influence of emotional abuse on pupils' academic performance

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are the influences of physical abuse on pupils' academic performance?
2. What are the influences of emotional abuse on pupils' academic performance?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study at 0.05 alpha levels:

1. There is no significant relationship between physical abuse and pupils' academic performance.
2. There is no significant relationship between emotional abuse and pupils' academic performance.

### **Literature Review**

The concept of child abuse has been viewed differently by scholars. This shows that there is no univocal definition of the concept. The concept has been defined as any mistreatment or neglect of the child that result in non-accidental harm or injury and which cannot be reasonably explained is referred to as child abuse (Axmaher 2004). According to Crosson (2008), one of the most critical consequences of chronic abuse is how it impacts a child's performance in school and interferes with the foundation a child needs to be successful throughout his or her school career. The prolonged abuse could hamper the child's overall development. Children who have been abused tend to score lower than the general population on measures of cognitive capacity, language development, and academic achievement (Crosson, 2008). That is to say that child abuse may have negative influence on the academic performance of an individual as well as disrupt the basis to a successful career later in life. Turton (2008) in his study found a negative influence of child abuse and poor academic performance and classroom functioning for school age children.

Similarly, Staff (2013) maintained that the rate of substantiated child abuse and neglect has been rising across the nation. A study by Asamaigbo (2004) revealed that children who have been physically abused might undergo a wide range of personality disorders such as increased fears, anxiety, anger, depression, hostility and aggression. According to Australian Childhood Foundation (2008), child abuse has been shown to result in poorer academic performance, greater delinquency, substance abuse, and other behavioural problems that often result in poor labour market outcomes later in life. Overall, in the presence of abuse, production is lower than would otherwise occur and people who experienced abuse were slightly less likely to participate in the labour force and to be employed full time, and slightly more likely to be unemployed or be employed part time.

A study by Tyler and Brownridge (2008) revealed that child abuse increases the risk of lower academic achievement and problematic school performance. Shonk and Cicchetti (2001) argued that children who are frequently insulted, beaten, belittled among others usually get low grades in school, which is an indicator of poor academic performance. Similarly, Sladea and Wissow (2007) indicated that childhood maltreatment is connected with emotional and behavioural problems throughout childhood which might result in impaired academic performance in middle and high school. Also, scholars like Eweniyi (2003), Bukoye (2004) and Mba (2003) in their studies revealed that children who are emotionally abused could manifest increased depression, anger, hostility, aggression and may lack interest in school activities. These children might lack concentration in activities like reading and writing. These Challenges on children might have negative bearing on their overall performance in school. In like manner, Alokun and Olatunji (2014) in their study stated that abused children lack concentration in the class which in turn may have negative influence on their performance.

However, the study is anchored on attachment theory propounded by Bowlby (1958). The theory maintains that if a child was separated from its mother within the first five years of life, it could affect the child's emotional development and social difficulties in later life. The theory emphasizes the physical aspect of mother child bonding and sees the attachment as an instructive; genetically determine two ways and a symbolic process. The theory is related to this study because it encourages parents to love and care for their

children, instead of humiliating and torturing their young minds with all sort of abuse. This will enable the child to interact freely, thereby improving their academic performance.

## Method

The research design used for the study is survey design. The area of study is Makurdi metropolis, the capital of Benue State. Makurdi Local Government Area was created in 1967 out of the then Tiv native authority, and became the state capital of Benue state from that time to date. The area of study lies on both sides of the bank of River Benue. The inhabitants of Makurdi include Tiv, Idoma, Igede, Itulo, Jukun, Hausa, among others (Nyagba, 1995). The sample size for this study consists of 150 pupils out of the population of 1545 public primary school pupils selected from five public primary schools namely.

An instrument titled: “Child Abuse and Academic Performance Questionnaire” (CAPQ) was developed by the researchers and used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire consists of 10 items on variables of physical abuse and emotional abuse on a four-point modified Likert rating scale with response mode of Strongly Agree (SA)=4 Agree (A) =3 Disagree (D) =2, and Strongly Disagree (SD)=1 respectively. The instrument was validated for use by three experts in Guidance and Counselling in the Department of Educational Foundations, Benue State University, Makurdi. The reliability of the instrument was done using Cronbach- Alpha Coefficient. The researchers administered the questionnaires by themselves.

The descriptive mean statistics using frequencies and table was used to answer the research questions while inferential statistics of chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

**Table1: Mean Responses of Respondents on Physical Abuse on Academic Performance**

| S/NO | CLUSTER A: PHYSICAL ABUSE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE                       | SA<br>4 | A<br>3 | D<br>2 | SD<br>1 | N   | $\bar{X}$ | DECISION |
|------|---|---------|--------|--------|---------|-----|-----------|----------|
| 1.   | Pupils who are always beaten could not do well in class                 | 20.0    | 38.9   | 13.3   | 28.0    | 150 | 2.51      | Accepted |
| 2.   | Pupils who are not well fed may pay much attention in class work        | 8.0     | 6.7    | 54.7   | 30.7    | 150 | 1.92      | Rejected |
| 3.   | Pupils who are tired might not participate well in class activities     | 62.0    | 13.3   | 6.7    | 17.3    | 150 | 3.48      | Accepted |
| 4.   | Pupils having wounds on their bodies may do well in outdoor activities. | 24.0    | 4.0    | 30.7   | 41.3    | 150 | 2.11      | Rejected |
| 5.   | Pupils who are not being cared for may not do well in homework.         | 44.0    | 39.3   | 4.7    | 12.0    | 150 | 3.15      | Accepted |

**Source: SPSS Output of Field Survey, 2020**

Results from above table (1) indicated that item 2 and 4 had mean values below the cut-off point of 2.50 and it was rejected by the participants while the other items had mean value of above the cut-off point of 2.50 and it was accepted by the participants.

**Table2: Mean Responses of Respondents on Emotional Abuse on Academic Performance**

| S/NO | CLUSTER B:<br>ABUSE ON<br>PERFORMANCE                                 | EMOTIONAL<br>ACADEMIC | SA<br>4 | A<br>3 | D<br>2 | SD<br>1 | N   | $\bar{X}$ | DECISION |
|------|---|-----------------------|---------|--------|--------|---------|-----|-----------|----------|
| 6.   | Pupils who are sad may not do well in outdoor activities              |                       | 32.0    | 44.0   | 4.0    | 20.0    | 150 | 2.88      | Accepted |
| 7.   | Pupils who are always blamed might not do well in class activities    |                       | 46.7    | 2.7    | 28.0   | 22.7    | 150 | 2.73      | Accepted |
| 8.   | Annoyance from home might make pupils to do well in class activities. |                       | 6.7     | 8.0    | 52.0   | 33.3    | 150 | 1.88      | Rejected |
| 9.   | Worried pupils may not do well in outdoor activities.                 |                       | 0.7     | 39.3   | 17.3   | 2.7     | 150 | 3.37      | Accepted |
| 10.  | Pupils who are always avoided might do well in class activities.      |                       | 24.0    | 8.0    | 20.0   | 48.0    | 150 | 2.08      | Rejected |

Source: SPSS Output of Field Survey, 2020

Results from above table (2) indicated that item 8 and 10 had mean values below the cut-off point of 2.50 and it was rejected by the participants while the other items had mean value above the cut-off point of 2.50 and it was accepted by the participants.

### Testing of the Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between physical abuse and pupils' academic performance.**

**Table 3: Pearson Chi-Square of physical abuse and pupils' academic performance**

| physical abuse and pupils' academic performance | Chi Square |
|---|------------|
| Chi-Square                                      | 378.52     |
| Df  | 12         |
| Asymp. Sig.                                     | .0001      |
| N   | 150        |

Value ( $X^2 = 378.52$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p = .0001 < .05$ )

Source: Graphpad Instat 3.05

Given that the calculated Chi square is 378.52 and less than the tabulated Chi square at 12 Degree of Freedom (df) under 5% level of significance estimated at 21. 026; the study therefore, rejects the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between physical abuse and pupils' academic performance and concludes that there is a relationship between physical abuse and pupils' academic performance in Public primary schools in Makurdi metropolis.

**Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between emotional abuse and pupils' academic performance**

Given that the calculated Chi square is 309.90 and less than the tabulated Chi square at 12 Degree of Freedom (df) under 5% level of significance estimated at 21. 026; the study therefore rejects the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between emotional abuse and pupils' academic

performance and concludes that there is a relationship between emotional abuse and pupils' academic performance in Public primary schools in Makurdi metropolis.

### **Discussions**

This present study examined critically the influence of child abuse on pupils' academic performance in public primary school in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State. The study sets out to ascertain the influence of physical and emotional abuses on pupils' academic performance.

The first hypothesis showed significant relation between physical abuse and pupils' academic performance. The finding is in agreement with some of the literature reviewed such as Asamaigbo and Asamaigbo in Akpende, Umuren and Ukpebi (2010) that confirmed that children who have been physically abused might undergo a wide range of personality disorders, such as increased fears, anxiety, anger, depression, hostility and aggression. Theoklitou, Kabitsis and Kabitsis (2012) argued that physical abuse is the deliberate infliction of serious injuries or actions that place the child at obvious risk of serious injury or death. They consider these to be illegal – bruises, scratches, burns, broken bones, lacerations, as well as reported “mishaps’ and rough treatment that could cause physical injury. These authors argued that a child’s physical abuse affects the child’s academic performance and interest. Alokun and Olatunji (2014) in the same line of thought, confirmed that abused children lack concentration in the class; and as a result, it has a negative influence on their academic performance.

The second hypothesis also showed significant relationship between emotional abuse and pupils' academic performance. The finding is consistent with some of the studies of Eweniyi (2003), Mba (2003) and Bukoye (2004) who confirmed in their studies that children who are emotionally abused might lack concentration in academic activities such as reading and writing as a result of depression, anger, hostility and aggression. Crosson (2008) who stresses that those children who have been abused tend to score lower which turn to have negative influence on their academic performance. Australian Childhood Foundation (2008) confirmed that child abuse leads to poorer academic performance. These assertions, hence concur to the findings of this study.

### **Conclusion**

The study established that child abuse has negative influence on pupils' academic performance in public primary schools in Makurdi metropolis. The study showed that physical and emotional abuses have negative influence on pupils' academic performance in the study area. The researchers therefore conclude that, there is a negative relationship between child abuse and academic performance.

### **Recommendations**

In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made by the researchers to address the influence of child abuse on pupils' academic performance in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State:

1. State Government should employ more school counsellors to help abused pupils in public primary schools to cope with academic challenges.
2. Parents and guardians should adopt good parental care, love and concern for their children; this could help them to perform better in schools.
3. Head teachers should refer cases of child abuse to school counsellors for expertise action.

## References

- Apebende, E., Umoren, G. & Ukpepi, B. (2010). The influence of child abuse on the Academic performance of primary school pupils in primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. *An International Multi-Disciplinary Journal*, 3(2): 49-51.
- Alokan, F.B. & Olatunji, I.C. (2014). Influence of child abuse on classroom behaviour and academic performance among primary and secondary school students. *European Scientific Journal, LsJ*, 10 (10)
- Anderson, K. (2007). Marriage, family and sexuality. Probing the hardness that impact your family. Edy's Bookshop and Library, Lagos.
- Australian Childhood Foundation (2008). *The cost of child abuse in Australia*. Australia: Monash University.
- Axmaher, L. W. (2004). Causes of child abuse health plus: Vanderbilt family and staff wellness programme.
- Bowlby, J. (1958). Attachment New York: Basic Books.
- Buxton, C. (2010). *The relationship between malnutrition, educational achievement and attendance among school children in Ghana*. Brighton: University of Sussex.
- Bukoye, R. O. (2004). Attitude towards child abuse and neglect among women: Implication for counselling. *The Counsellor*, 20 (1) 144 – 152.
- Coohy, C., Renner, L. M., Hua, L., Zhang, Y. J., & Whitney, S. D. (2011). Academic achievement despite child maltreatment: A longitudinal study. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 35(9): 688-699.
- Crosson, C. (2008). *Understanding Child Abuse and Neglect*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Eweniyi, G. B. (2003). Child sexual abuse and the right of the Nigerian child. *The Counsellor*, 18 (1) 166 – 172.1
- Mba, A.I. (2003). The problems of child abuse in Nigeria. Edited conference proceedings. 77-82
- McCoy, M. L. & Keen, S.M. (2013). Child abuse and neglect (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Obekpa, I. A. (2001). Child abuse: Consequences and effects on education and society. *International Journal of Continuing Education*, 2(2) 136– 147.
- Okorie, A.N. (2014). Peer pressure, time management and academic performance of in-school adolescents in Umuahia educational zone, Abia State Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, University of Nsukka.
- Ramez, G., Widom, S., Browne, C., Fergusson, D., Webb, E. & Sinow, J. (2009). Burden and consequences of child maltreatment in high-income countries. *The Lancet*, 373 (9657): 68- 81
- Shonk, S.M. & Cicchetti, D. (2001). Maltreatment, competency deficits, and risk for academic and behavioural maladjustment. *Developmental Psychology*. 37(1):3-17
- Sladea, E. & Wissow, L. (2007). *The influence of childhood maltreatment on adolescents' academic performance*. *Economic Education Review*, 26(5): 604–614

- Staff, F. (2013). Rates of abused and neglected children on the rise in Australia. *Journal of health* 4(2):67-69
- Theoklitou, D., Kabisis, N. & Kabisi, (2012). Physical and emotional abuse of primary school children by teachers. *Child Abuse Neg.* 26(1), 64- 70
- Tyler, J. & Brownridge, S. (2008).Child abuse. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 37(5): 50-56
- Taylor, C. & Steward, W. (2011).*Women and child abuse*. London: Hertman (Pvt) Ltd.
- Turton, J.(2008). *Child abuse, gender, and society*. NewYork: Routledge
- UNICEF (2012).Violence against Kenyan children excessive. Nairobi: UNICEF
- UNICEF( 2013). Rampant child abuse. NewYork: UNICEF