Perceived Psychological Implications of Family Violence During Childhood on Young Adults' Relationships with Other People (The Case of Inlga Ijebu Igbo Ogun State, Nigeria)

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Abstract

Family violence occurs in private but involves community members and affects the network of the victim`s relationships with other people. The experience of family violence hurts the victims emotionally, economically and socially; likewise the community is affected in terms of health. The study therefore examined the psychological implications of family violence experienced during childhood on young adults' relationships with other people. The population for this study is all young adults in INLGA Ijebu igbo Ogun State out of which 840 respondents were purposively selected and used for this study. A modified standardized instrument HITS with reliability of 0.78 and a self-structured questionnaire with reliability of 0.89 were used to collect data for the study. The data obtained were analyzed using inferential statistics of chi-square to determine the acceptance and non-acceptance of the three hypotheses tested at $p< 0.05$. All hypotheses formulated were rejected; this implies that exposure to family violence during childhood has implications on young adults relationship in Ijebu igbo, while false self and victimhood thinking were perceived psychological implications of family violence on young adults relationship. Based on the findings, the recommendations were suggested, such as: active teaching of family life education will address most of the variables challenging family wellbeing; therefore, school children should be encouraged to offer family life education while family violence resistance education and family violence victim management should be included in family life education syllabus. Elders involved in religious education should be trained in the technicality of family violence resistance education and family violence victim management while health workers and security officers should not be exempted in this training and family violence victim management should be part of the activities of the social and media unit of the state and local governments by coming up with jingles and a campaign that could foster a reporting system of family violence.

Keywords: family violence, psychological implication, adult relationship

Introduction

Family violence is a pattern of physical, psychological, economic and sexual coercion of any family member in the order that is punctuated by physical assault or threat of bodily harm (Barnett, Manly, & Cicchetti, 1991). According to Bartels, (2010) it is a behaviour that is physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically and economically abusive, threatening, coercive or aiming at controlling or dominating another person within the family settings. Family violence is an unjust and unlawful display of force tending to intimidate family members. According to the Code of Practice for Specialist Family Violence Services for Women and Children (2006), family violence is the repeated use of violent, threatening, coercive or controlling behaviour by an individual against a family member(s). There is always a close relationship between victims and the perpetrator of family violence. The victims

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are immediate family members like spouses, parents, brothers, sisters, sons and / or daughters; extended family member such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces and siblings-in-law (McCluskey, 2010). The victimization in this case is based on the socio-cultural relations in the family (marital, parental, collateral).

Family violence rate is higher in households where children are present, men and women who experienced family violence had children in their care and these children had witnessed the violence episodes in the family, (Adelman & Taylor, 2015; ABS, 2013; Bellis, Hughes, Perkins, & Bennett, 2013; Hellman, Johnson & Dobson, 2010). Erickson's Psychosocial Stage 1 - Trust versus Mistrust - during the years of early infancy, when the child must develop a sense of trust for his/her caregiver, but the experience of family violence during this stage leads to inadequate emotional development, causes the child to remain at this stage instead of passing through to the appropriate stages. Because family violence experience has disrupted gaining the needed trust at the early age of the child, this would make the child grow up in anticipation that the world is dangerous and people are not to be trusted. This also makes most children possess false self and victimhood thinking personality (McCluskey, 2010).

According to ABS (2013), Bartels, (2010), Hellmann et al. (2010) and Bellis et al. (2013), this also affects their self-actualization in the future. In order for an individual to self-actualize successfully, the environment must provide all basic needs and social support, based on Abraham Maslow's (1993; 1996) Transpersonal Theory of Self-Actualization and Self-Transcendence Hierarchy of Needs, there is an inherent tendency of people to express their innate potential for love, creativity and spirituality. But when home, being the first environment for all human beings, fails to provide the basic need due to violence, the children would not be able to establish the feeling of security and the sense of being loved, because violence has disrupted their ability to transcend to higher levels, which in turn affects their adulthood relationship (Adelman & Taylor, 2015).

Children witnessing family violence hear violent language, are used as a 'weapon', are forced to watch or participate in the assault of others, blamed for the violence, used as a hostage, or have to interfere to defend a parent, intervene or stop the violence from occurring at home, see a parent with bruises and arrested (Richards, 2011). The exposure has a strong effect on children's well-being, ranging from psychological to behavioral impacts like depression, anxiety, trauma symptoms, increased aggression levels, anti-social behaviors, lower social competence, temperament issues, low self-esteem, deregulated mood, loneliness and increased likelihood of substance abuse, peer conflict or impaired cognitive functioning. Teenage pregnancy, truancy, suicide attempts, and delinquency are also listed as impacts (Thompson & Smith, 2011; Richards, 2011).

Living in a violent home may lead to a range of serious mental health conditions like depression, substance abuse, exhibition of attitudes and behaviors reflecting their childhood family violence experiences (Krug, Dahlberg, Merci, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002; Schechter et al., 2011). Family violence increases a child's risk for internalizing and externalizing these outcomes during their adolescence and adulthood stage. At these stages, the effect in males is hyper aggression; therefore, male victims are more aggressive than female ones and may likely perpetrate abuse on their spouses and/or children. This justifies the use of violence or causes the males to carry violence-tolerant roles in their adult relationships with other people (Yamawaki, Ochoa-Shipp, Pulsipher, Harlos & Swindler, 2012 and McCluskey, 2010).

Exposure to family violence during childhood has been associated with a higher likelihood of the following problems among adults: issues related to cognitive, emotional and social functioning and development which can lead to behavioural and learning difficulties, an increase in the risk of mental health issues, including depression and anxiety disorders and issues related to education and employment prospects. More acceptance of or willingness to excuse the use of violence against women, involvement in violent relationships with peers, conflict with adults and other forms of authority, increased risk of becoming

perpetrators or victims themselves and a detrimental impact on their future parenting capacities (Laing, 2010; McCluskey, 2010; Richards, 2011; Eberstadt, 2015).

According to Schechter et al. (2011), Shuval, et al. (2010) and Sousa, et al. (2011) victims of family violence during childhood are likely to demonstrate more psychological and behavioural imbalances than the non-victims. They experience clinical disturbance in emotions and behaviour at a significantly higher rate than other children display heightened aggression, impulsiveness, anxiety and poor social skills (children as young as 3-5 years of age from violent homes are found to be more physically and verbally aggressive when playing with others than children living in non-violent homes). They also have restricted range of contacts with peers and those outside the immediate family and endorse the notion that men have the right to be the most powerful and privileged member of the family. In addition to these observable manifestations, there are other layers of damage that can occur, which can have long-term and pervasive consequences. These relate to the ways in which the actual ability to think about and process experience can become disrupted and compromised (Krug et al., 2002; Sousa, et al., 2011; Thompson & Smith, 2011; Yamawaki, et al. 2012).

Objectives

The objectives of this research were:

- To advocate strong and safe communities, free from family violence

- To campaign for building respectful non-violent relationships early in children

- To campaign for FV victims` safety

- To campaign for prompt response to FV victims safety

Hypotheses

1. Victimhood thinking will be a psychological implication of FV during childhood on their adult relationships with others.

2. False self will be perceived as a psychological implication of FV during childhood on their adult relationships with others.

3. Family violence during childhood will have psychological implications on adults' relationships with others.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design in which data were gathered on the variables of the study as they occurred at the time. The target population for the study was all young adults in Igbo Ijebu North Local Government Area, Ijebu Ijebu, Ogun State, Nigeria. A modified standardized instrument named Hurt, Insults, Threaten and Screamed (HITS) (Scott & Health, n.d.) with reliability of 0.78 was used to establish that the young adults recruited for this study had experienced family violence in one form or another, while a self-structured questionnaire named Family Violence Psychological Implications Questionnaire (FaPIQ) (Kalesanwo & Adenuga, 2010) with reliability of 0.89 was used to collect data on psychological implications of family violence. The reliability of the two instruments was established through test/retest method with a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

Ijebu Ijebu has five major towns: Atikori, Oke sopen, Ojowo, Japara and Oke agbo. These towns were adequately covered in this study; 168 respondents were randomly selected from each town using religious centres as catchment area with simple random sampling techniques. The sample covered only urban segments of each zone. Therefore, the sample size for the study was 840 respondents. The data collected were analyzed with inferential statistics of chi-square to test the acceptance and non-acceptance of hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Hypothesis one: Victimhood thinking will be a psychological implication of family violence (FV)   during childhood on adult relationship.

Table 1: X^2 analysis of Victimhood as an impact of FV during childhood on adult relationship

Variable	X^2 Critics	X^2 Obtained	df	P	Decision
Victimhood thinking	7.82	471.740	3	.05	Not accepted

The first hypothesis was supported, as X^2 obtained = 471.740 is greater than X^2 critics = 7.82 at 0.05 level of significance and df = 3. This implies that victim thinking is perceived as a significant psychological implication of FV during childhood on adult relationship in INLGA Ijebu Igbo. This finding is consistent with Eberstadt's (2015) findings that FV during childhood impacts young adults' relationships with other people. Victims sometimes engage in activities which exacerbate their own impairment, such as substance abuse, self-mutilation, eating disorders, and prescription drug misuse in an attempt to cope with the maltreatment they have been exposed to (Sousa, et al. 2011; Schechter et al., 2011).

Thompson & Smith (2011) opine that victimhood thinking always makes adults identify others as the cause of undesired situation and this makes them exhibit heightened attention level (hypervigilance) when dealing with other people. Bartels (2010) states that victimhood thinking makes people categorize others into good or bad and this always makes them see more negative than positive intentions of others, prompting them to be unwilling to take small and uncalculated risks. Victimhood thinking makes people self-abusing and dependable because victims deny responsibility for their action (Yamawaki et al, 2012).

Hypothesis two: False self will be a psychological implication of family violence during childhood on adult relationship.

Table 2: X^2 analysis of false self as an impact of FV during childhood on adult relationship

Variable	X2 Critics	X2 Obtained	df	P	Decision
FV adult relationship	7.82	582.010	3	.05	Not accepted

The second hypothesis has been confirmed, as X^2 obtained = 582.010 and is, thus, greater than X^2 critics = 7.82 at 0.05 level of significance and df = 3. This implies that false self is perceived as a significant psychological implication of FV during childhood on adult relationship in INLGA Ijebu Igbo. This finding is in line with Adelman & Taylor (2015) who say that FV during childhood impacts adult relationships with others. The experience of family violence during childhood makes young adults live an unsettled life (Schechter et al., 2011).

Eberstadt (2015) identifies one of the psychological wounds of children from dysfunctional family to be false self and this makes the victim to be unconsciously attracted to hurting them partners repeatedly, despite painful results. The wounds in people with false selves cause relationship conflicts and stress leading to psychological breakups. This is also in line with the findings of Adelman & Taylor (2015), Laing, (2010), and Eberstadt (2015) that the victims unconsciously choose harmful and unsatisfying work, social relationships and religious settings; they hire professional helpers to reduce family stresses. They suffer from relationship and health problems, and die prematurely, without knowing who they really were or could have become.

Hypothesis three: Family violence during childhood will have psychological implications on adult relationship

Table 3: X^2 analysis of FV during childhood on adult relationship

Variable	X2 Critics	X2 Obtained	Df	P	Decision
False self	7.82	49.480	3	.05	Not accepted

Based on the data collected, coded and analyzed, table 3 revealed that X^2 obtained = 49.480 is greater than X^2 critics = 7.82 at 0.05 level of significance and df = 3, therefore, the third hypothesis has been confirmed. The implication of this is that FV during childhood has significant psychological implications on adult relationships with others in INLGA Ijebu Igbo. This result is in line with the position of Hellman, Johnson & Dobson (2010), Bellis et al. (2013) and Adelman & Taylor (2015) that FV leads to loss of victims' health, dignity, security and freedom of self-determination.

This also corroborates Richards (2011) and McCluskey (2010) who report that children witnessing FV are likely to possess insecure, avoidance attachment style later in the future. This is also supported by Sousa et al, (2011) finding that witnessing FV at childhood leads to avoidance of close relationships, keeping friends at emotional distance, hiding emotions, secrecy, shutting down when others show emotions, desiring relationship strongly and feeling lonely. It is also supported by Schechter et al. (2011) that exposure of most children to FV makes them have fearful avoidance attachment style when grown up. Eberstadt (2015) states that they fear both intimacy and loneliness. They close off emotionally and showing affection is uncomfortable to them at adult stage. They always have hard times trusting people because rejection terrifies them; most of them display anxious-preoccupied attachment style at adult stage. Their mood swings unexpectedly, when they desire a lot of intimacy but are highly watchful of any change in their relationship.

Conclusion and recommendations

This study examined the psychological implications of family violence experienced during childhood on young adults' relationships with other people in INLGA Ijebu igbo, Ogun state, Nigeria. The three proposed hypotheses were confirmed. This implies that the exposure of children to FV in Ijebu igbo has psychological implications (victimhood thinking, false self and committing family violence themselves or being tolerant of it) on their relationships with other people at young adult stage and adulthood.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations can be suggested:

1. Active teaching of family life education will address most of the variables challenging family wellbeing; therefore school children should be offered family life education and family violence victim management education in their syllabus.

2. Elders in the church and mosques should be trained in the technicality of family violence victim management while health workers and security officers should not be exempted in this training.

3. Family violence victim management should be part of the activities of the social and media unit of the state and local governments by coming up with jingles and campaigns that could foster reporting system of FV.

4. Government should float more family mental health education programmes at all levels to rehabilitate family violence victims while individuals and nongovernmental organizations should partner with the government to reduce mental health issues.

5. Marriage coordinators in religious centres should not limit the tests of intending spouses to HIV test, Genotype and fertility test. An Irritability Quotient Test (IQ-Test) should be added to the screening and the couples should be properly guided based on the test results.

6. An IQ-Test should be added to medical screening of students admitted to higher institutions and relationship education rooted in family life education should be introduced to general studies curriculum to enable to manage the relationship deficits of students. This might help the society at large.

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