

Relationship Between Dimensions of Sibling Abuse and Personality Development

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Abstract: This study investigated the relationship between the dimensions of siblings abuse and the personality development of children. Relevant literatures were reviewed for the study. To guide the study, three research questions and three hypotheses were developed. These were used to measure the main variables of the study. The target population for this study were all families in Abraka, Delta State. A sample of 380 respondents was randomly selected for the study: It comprised staff and students in the university in Abraka and students of primary and secondary schools in Abraka community. The instrument for the study was a questionnaire titled Dimensions of Sibling Abuse and Personality Development Scale. To analyse the data generated, the t-test and multiple regression statistics were used. The analysis of data revealed that siblings predispose young people to dysfunctional personality development. It also revealed a significant difference between dimensions of sibling abuse and the gender of the respondents. The conclusion drawn from this study therefore was that sibling abuse irrespective of its dimensions has a negative impact on the victims of such abuse. The effects are noticed in their emotional, psychological and physical development of children that are abused. The study therefore recommends that structures should be put on ground to check this ugly phenomenon that is gradually destroying the personalities of young children. This can be done through effective counselling for family members, rehabilitation for abusive parents and penalty to be imposed on anyone who indulges in this behaviour.

Key words: Personality development, children, hypotheses, variables, dysfunctional, sibling abuse, Abraka

INTRODUCTION

The family is made of two or more persons related by blood or marriage (parents, children and relations). It is the basic unit of the society and nucleus of any nation Ebenuwa-Okoh (2007). The family is a basic universal social institution and inevitable part of human society. It is the primary unit of socialization for any child. It provides children the first environment for interaction. It is where the children imbibe values, norms; develop traits and all the qualities that build their personality. It provides the social and psychological environment in which the child thrives or wanes. The parenting style, support, values, norms, interpersonal relationship within the family, discipline and the amount of resources available in the family affect the development of family relationship, mental and emotional state of the child. The family provides the social and psychological environment in which the mental and emotional dispositions of the child are developed.

Conflict and misunderstanding are part of every human relationship. They also exist within the family. Misunderstanding occurs among family members due to differences in ideas, values, actions, resource possessions and even beliefs. Where these conflicts are not positively and promptly resolved, it leads to family

violence. Family violence is a multiple complex problem that involves interlocking variables at the group (family structure and class) and personal levels (personal characteristics, resource and possession).

Family violence includes all forms of assaultive behaviours among family members (Ebenuwa-Okoh, 2010; Onuoha, 2008). Such violence may be manifested in different dimensions of abuse by family members. If the resultant misunderstanding is within the children, it is called sibling abuse.

Sibling abuse is a wilful attempt by a sibling to hurt the other sibling, through verbal, sexual, psychological or psychosocial means. This abuse can manifest through physical aggression battering, kicking, beating, constant psychological (abuse) belittling threats, intimidation, humiliation, monitoring of movement and restriction of access to information or assistance, sexual abuse (including forced intercourse and other forms of sexual humiliation) (Gyuse, 2008; Gilchrist and Graham, 1994).

The family processes which refer to the nature of the interactions within the family environment to which the children are exposed affect the child's personality development. Violence (stressful conditions along life course) make individual adment increasingly unstable. The children who witness family violence and experience abuse develop emotional, psychological, personality and

academic problems (Kembe, 2008; Oguegbune-Okwuenu, 2008). This is manifested in the personality of the individual. The consequence of the above has hard and despoiling effects on her victim. The consequence is manifested in the victim's personality in form inferiority complex, low self esteem, aggression, hopelessness among other personality disorders.

Cultural practices ascribe roles to male and female in the society. Such roles affect the expression of feelings and needs. In Nigeria and the African society in general, customary practices, tribal beliefs and values give the man a leadership role in the home. Such roles could be used positively or negatively. The expression has been that male abuse such roles by oppressing female members of the family through beating (which is a form of physical violence) and other forms of abuse that are present in the family. Such males may also extend such abuse to children in the home.

All of these further compound the family environment in which children grow and develop. Sibling experiences in the home affect the nature of their interaction with one another. Male children begin to abuse female children and younger ones because they have observed such behaviour traits in male parents who have exhibited such behaviours. This has the possibility of deepening and increasing incidences of sibling abuse in the family.

Age plays a major role in the interaction of siblings particularly in the first 20 years of their life. As the children are growing they begin to imbibe the values, norms and behaviour patterns observable in the family. These form the crux of their personality development. The nature of interaction determines the level of positive relationship that exists within the children. These activities and practices witnessed by children affect the children in all spheres of life (Onuoha, 2008).

Statement of problem: The increasing incidences of sibling abuse in families is becoming very disturbing. Family structures and processes are no longer able to effectively manage the developmental process of their children.

That is why there are many children today with dysfunctional personalities. It has become necessary therefore to examine the dimensions of these abuse and how it affects the development of the child. The study will be guided by the following research questions:

- Is there any relationship between dimensions of sibling abuse and personality development of children?
- Is there any difference in the dimensions of sibling abuse between male and female sibling?
- Is there any difference in the dimension of sibling abuse between teenagers and young adults?

Research hypothesis:

- There is no significant relationship between dimensions of sibling abuse and personality development of the victims
- There is no significant difference between male and female sibling and their dimensions of sibling abuse
- There is no significant difference between teenagers and young adult and dimensions of sibling abuse

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The design of the study is survey. The target population is all families in Abraka P.O. in Delta State. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to select the sample size of 380 respondents.

Sample: The subjects were 380 respondents from Abraka community. The community is made up staff, students of the university community and their children in the primary and secondary schools as well as the indigenes of the local community. The sampling took into consideration the various categories of individuals, males, females, young children in secondary schools, undergraduates, staff, students and family types. Respondents from polygamous families are 173, monogamous 207, male 189, females 191, 12-19 years 181 while 20 above 199.

Instrument: The research instrument used in this study is titled Dimensions of Sibling Abuse and Personality Development. The instrument was divided into two parts. Part one sought relevant demographic information on gender, age, type of family. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of 44 items. The instrument was designed such that the participants could respond to the items on a 4 point scale format of Very Often (VO), Often (O), Rare (R) and Very Rare (VR) as well as Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

It measures six sub-parts of: Psycho-Social abuse, 10 items; Physical abuse, 6 items; Emotional abuse, 8 items; Sexual abuse, 6 items; Family violence, 6 items and personality development, 8 items; totalling 44 items. The instrument had face and content validity.

The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha. The following coefficient alpha (0.05 levels) was obtained. Physical abuse: $r = 0.64$ ($p < 0.05$), Psycho-social abuse: $r = 0.65$ ($p < 0.05$), Emotional abuse: $r = 0.61$ ($p < 0.05$), Sexual abuse: $r = 0.71$ ($p < 0.05$),

Table 1: Dimensions of sibling abuse as predictors of dysfunctional personality

Parameters	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F (Sig.)
Regression	4353.982	4	1088.245	47.3200
Residual	8625.595	375	23.002	
Total	12978.576	379		

*Significant at 0.05 level; $R = 0.579$; $R^2 = 0.335$; R^2 (adj) = 0.328; Standard error = 4.796

Table 2: A table showing the gender differences in physical, emotional, psychosocial and sexual dimensions of sibling abuse in community

Sibling abuse	Gender	N	X	SD	df	Cal. T	Sig.	Mean diff.	Decision	Decision
Physical	Male	189	9.57	3.554	378	2.800	0.005*	0.954	Sign.	Reject
	Female	191	8.02	3.077						
Emotional	Male	189	12.14	4.242	378	2.048	0.041*	0.876	Sign.	Reject
	Female	191	11.26	4.093						
Psychosocial	Male	189	12.27	4.514	378	1.280	0.201	0.574	Not sign.	Accept
	Female	191	11.70	4.217						
Sexual	Male	189	7.73	3.890	378	2.463	0.014*	0.814	Sign	Reject
	Female	191	6.92	2.374						

Table 3: Difference in the dimensions of sibling abuse between ages 12-19 and 20 and above

Sibling abuse	Age	N	X	SD	df	Cal. t	Sig.	Mean diff.	Decision	Decision
Emotional	12-19	181	12.10	4.228	378	1.791	0.740	0.768	Not sign.	Accept
	20-above	199	11.33	4.122						
Physical	12-19	181	9.53	3.586	378	2.540	0.011*	0.869	Sign.	Reject
	20-above	199	8.68	3.076						
Psychosocial	12-19	181	12.24	4.463	378	1.089	0.277	0.489	Not sign.	Accept
	20-above	199	11.75	4.284						
Sexual	12-19	181	7.70	3.884	378	2.195	0.029*	0.727	Sign.	Reject
	20-above	199	6.97	2.475						

Family violence: $r = 0.54$ ($p < 0.05$) and Personality development: $r = 0.73$ ($p < 0.05$). This revealed that the internal consistency of the instrument was reliable. The whole instrument had $r = 0.75$.

Data analysis: Multi-regression and t-test statistical tools were used to analyse the data. Note that all the variables tested in this study are significant if P is less than or equal 0.05 level.

Data presentation

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between dimensions of sibling abuse and personality development of the victims. Table 1 shows that a combination of the four dimensions of sibling abuse predicted dysfunctional personality of her victims.

It yielded a co-efficient of multiple regression 0.58 and R^2 (adj) 0.328. This means that all the four independent variables (physical, emotional, psychosocial and sexual dimensions) accounted for 33% of the variance in dysfunctional personality.

The table also shows that the analysis of variance of multiple regression data produce F-ratio of 47.31 significant at 0.05 level. This means that these variables significantly predicted dysfunctional personality among the respondents that participated in this study.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between male and female sibling and their dimensions of sibling abuse. Table 2 shows that there are significant differences in the physical abuse mean scores between male and female respondents ($t=2.80$ is significant). This means gender influence physical sibling abuse. Also, results on Table 2 shows that significant differences exist between male and female respondents in emotional abuse and sexual abuse while in psychosocial abuse, there is no significant difference based on gender.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between teenagers and young adult and dimensions of sibling abuse. The results in Table 3 shows that emotional dimensions of sibling abuse scores of the respondents were not significantly different based on the age = 0.1.791 at 0.74, $df = 378$ for psychosocial dimension is equally not significant ($t = 1.089$ at 0.277, $df = 378$) while physical dimension and sexual dimension of sibling abuse were significant at 0.05 between the ages of 12-19 and 20 above ($t = 2.540$ at 0.11 level and $df = 378$) and $T = 2.195$ at 0.029).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that the dimensions of sibling abuse affect the personality development of the individual. The reason for the findings in this study is that most victims of abuse express the effect of this psychological trauma in a reticent way of keeping relationship and the value of their potentials. This finding agrees with Kembe (2008) who opined that abuse leads to dysfunctional personality. The various dimensions of abuse affect all aspects of the personality development of her victims. The experience leaves the victims emotionally devastated, physically desolate, sexually plundered and psychologically ravaged. All these make the individual’s personality dysfunctional (Table 1).

There is a significant gender difference in the four dimensions of sibling abuse (physical, emotional, psychological and sexual). The mean scores of physical sibling abuse from the dimension are 9.57 and 8.62, respectively. This shows that males are more prone to physical abuse than their female counterparts. The reason for this finding is that males are more energetic and easily get annoyed and so they tend to express their anger immediately. The mean scores for sibling abuse from the psycho-socio dimension are 12.14 for males and 11.26 for

females. From the above the mean score for male is higher than that of the females. The reason is that they express their anger more easily because of the surplus energy at their disposal. In addition, the customary practices, tribal beliefs and values favour males to engage in violence which deepens and increases the incidences of sibling abuse in the cultural setting (Table 2).

Table 3 shows that there is significant difference in the four dimensions of sibling abuse from ages 12-19 and 20 above. The mean scores of ages 12-19 are higher than 20 and above. The reason for this finding is that the children at the former age are at their adolescent period. This is a time of storm and stress, role identity and confusion; most of the siblings are still living in the same house under their parents, the interaction is more and so the abuse is more pronounced when compared to their counterpart who may have left home (schooling or working). The frequency and the rate of friction is reduced among the latter because they hardly see one another. During adolescence, the children are always very energetic hence they look for avenues to dissipate the excess energy at their disposal which leads to an increase in their rate of abuse. This could be attributed to the reason why many of them are involved in gangsterism or in other delinquent behaviours which society frowns at. At this time, changes in psychological functioning are inevitable. This leads to the formation self-identity (Erickson, 1963). This formed identity is heightened by the dynamics of family circumstance (alteration in family resources) thereby leading to changes and adments within the family.

CONCLUSION

Abuse, irrespective of it's dimension has a lot of devastating effects on her victims (emotionally, physically, psychologically). All these affect the personality of the victims. This is manifested in the victim through inferiority complex, low self-esteem, unstable inter-personal relationship, self hate, low productivity. In addition, it has led to long term health problems such as chronic pain, physical disability, depression and even suicide. This problem has been recognized in African setting though undocumented. Family violence affects the psychological welfare of children and leads to unstable emotional atmosphere in the family. Unfortunately, however, the cultural norms seem to favour sibling abuse and violence. Based on the findings of this study; concerted efforts should be made by counsellors to minimize these ills in the families.

IMPLICATIONS

Some implications for counselling that can be drawn from this study include the following:

- Counsellors need to research and find out how to handle issues of siblings abuse in the home and the school environment
- Counsellors should develop strategies on how to get abusive parents and children to go for therapy

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made for the study:

- Counselling centres within the schools that are not very functional should be revived and made active. This will help in preparing the centres for the treatment of abused children
- Students should be made to believe and trust the counselling process. This can be done through orientation programmes and seminars
- Counselling centres should be developed in the communities that will take care of abusive and older siblings who are no longer in school

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