

SCHOOL VIOLENCE: A THREAT TO GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Since the last decade, there have been reported cases of violence against children in schools such as torture, kidnapping, shootings, sexual harassment, rape and brutal corporal punishment. Violence against children is a major threat to global development. It can affect children's ability to learn or even their willingness to go to school. It is on this premise that this paper takes a look at the nature and causes of school violence. In conclusion, strategies for addressing violence in schools were discussed. Among these are that counselling services in schools should be strengthened with a view to protecting children from violence, and that policy framework for violence-free education should be formulated to provide the enabling environment for addressing violence against children in schools. Also administrators should make the teaching of empathy and anger management compulsory by introducing them into the curricula of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. This will entrench in the youth the ability to manage anger when infuriated and also have love for others as they love themselves. Thus, the global culture of violence will be curbed.

Keywords: Violence, children, schools, torture, kidnapping, rape.

Introduction

School violence is any form of violent activity or activities inside the school premises. Since the last decade, there have been reported cases of violence against children such as torture, kidnapping, shootings, sexual harassment, rape, brutal corporal punishment among others. However, there is not much proper documentation of most of these violent acts. In response, a global in-depth study of violence against children was commissioned by the United Nations 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, (United Nations Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children, 2005). According to World Health Organization (WHO) (2002), 53,000 children were murdered worldwide. A survey from many countries showed that between 20 and 65 percent of school-aged children reported to have been bullied verbally or physically. Furthermore WHO (2002) estimated that 150 million girls and 73 million boys under 18 years were sexually abused.

In West and Central Africa, thousands of children are trafficked every year. Sexual violence and rape of children appear to be spiraling. According to Ogundipe & Obinna (2007), in Nigeria, sexual abuse often takes place behind closed doors and it is usually unreported and undetected. They noted that even though figures do not exist, it does not mean that children are not abused. There are thousands of children living on the streets of Lagos and other major cities, neglected by their parents or abandoned, and as such they are exposed to so many hazards and threats.

According to a study conducted by UNICEF (2007) in Nigeria, report of act of violence among learners

was generally low, ranging from four percent for sexual violence to 40 percent in the case of physical violence. Most learners will report cases of physical violence to school teachers (45.1%) and also to the head teacher (34.5%). Some of the major reasons why learners will not report cases of violence, especially physical and gender-based violence, were because they felt nothing will be done. Most cases of rape are not reported and a larger percentage of the students than their teachers are aware of incidences of rape. More learners in urban areas than rural areas as well as those in Junior Secondary Schools than Primary Schools knew about students who had been raped. Violence against children is a major threat to global development. It can affect children's ability to learn or even their willingness to go to school. It can lead children to run away from home, exposing them to further danger.

Causes of School Violence

There are many things that could cause school children to engage in school violence.

• **The Impact of Globalization on Violence**

The drive to increase the rate of profit through technological innovation results in the reducing of labour costs, which leads to elimination of jobs, lower real wages, decrease social benefits and suppresses the basic rights of workers so as to ensure high profitability. Also, there are the increase prices of basic commodities and the overall decreases in standard of living. In addition, the underdeveloped nations of the world and those with weak economies are made bankrupt.

Tandon, (2001) argued that globalization also breeds violence and conflict when it continues to produce inequality, poverty, environmental destruction and unprecedented concentration of economic power for a few while the majority are marginalized and excluded. Victims of adjustment programmes and structural policies of

globalization, become discontent, militant in response, as they seek an end to the violence of militarisms, poverty and injustice.

Listening to global news, we constantly hear of violence and brutality meted out on people around the world. Examples abound everywhere. These include the human carriage in many conflict situations in Africa, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Liberia; the, killing of innocent civilians in Iraq, bombings in America and acts of terrorism in Southern Russia resulting in killings of hundreds of school children and their parents (Agulanna, 2006). These are examples of violence influenced directly or remotely by globalization. Such high level of violence brought frequently to almost every doorstep as a result of globalization has great influence on the conscience of young people. Children tend to copy these violent behaviours.

Lawig (2003) argued that young people are the most vulnerable to the lure of the products of globalization like the television digital games, cell phone, night life and internet. They are easily attracted to these agents of cultural change and thus gradually imbibe the global culture of violence. Kemjika and Woruka (1995) opined that young people are involved in various forms of violence such as peer cruelty, robbery, assault of students and teachers, arson, rape destruction of property and even murder. Agulanna (2006) reported that 60% of persons arrested in Nigeria for trafficking and arson were adolescents. Also, Agulanna (2006) argued that the prevalence of delinquent acts among Nigeria adolescents has increased in the lasts three years in terms of frequency of recorded delinquent crisis and number of adolescents involved. One can safely conclude, from the foregoing, that in Nigeria today, violence is one of the major causes of death for adolescents.

The students involve themselves in cult activities resulting in multiple killings, raping, maiming and destruction of school properties. Nwachukwu (2000) opined that there is disrespect for authority, widespread dishonesty and cheating among adolescents. Violence results in students missing in schools and being less active in class. Thus, in the opinion of Kemjika and Woruka (1995), the system is likely to breed educationally unfit, morally unhealthy and socially maladaptive citizens. This is the destructive phase of globalization.

• **Internalizing and Externalising Behaviour**

Internalizing behaviour reflects inhibition, anxiety and depression. Internalizing behaviour has been found in some cases of youth violence, although in some youths, depression is associated with substance abuse. Students with internalizing problems rarely act out, so they are often

overlooked by school personnel (Christie, Nelson & Jolivet, 2005).

• **Home Environment**

The home environment is thought to contribute to school violence. The Constitutional Rights Foundation (1997) suggested that long-term exposure to gun violence, parental alcoholism, domestic violence, physical abuse of the child and child sexual abuse teaches children that criminal and violent activities are acceptable. There is also some evidence indicating that exposure to television violence (Bushman & Huesmann, 2001) and to a lesser extent, violent video games (Anderson & Bushman, 2001) are related to increased aggressiveness in children, which in turn may carry over to schools.

• **Neighbourhood Environment**

Neighbourhood and communities provide the context for school violence. Communities with high rates of crime and drug use teach youths the violent behaviour that are carried into school (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1985; Evans, 2004; and Johnson, Burke & Gielen, 2011). Dilapidated housing in the neighbourhood of school has been found to be associated with school violence (Limbos & Casteel, 2008). Exposure to deviant peers is a risk factor for high levels of aggressivity (Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce & Radosevich, 1979). Research has shown that poverty and high population densities are associated with higher rates of school violence (Evans, 2004). In addition, a well-controlled longitudinal research indicates that exposure to gun violence in early adolescence is related to the initiation of serious physical violence in later adolescence (Bingenheimer, Brennan & Earls, 2005).

• **School Environment**

Research has linked the school environment to school violence (Limbos & Casteel, 2008; Meyer-Adams & Conner, 2008). Teacher assaults are associated with a higher percentage of male faculty, a higher proportion of male students and a higher proportion of students receiving free and reduced cost lunch (an indication of poverty) (Casteel, Peek-Asa & Limbos, 2007). In general, a large male population, higher grade levels, a history of high level of disciplinary problems in the school, high student to teacher ratios, and an urban location are related to violence in schools (Limbos & Casteel, 2008).

Strategies for Addressing Violence in Schools

Many strategies could be used to address violence against children in schools

1. Counselling services in schools should be strengthened with a view to protecting children from violence.
2. Policy framework for violence-free education should be formulated to provide the enabling environment for addressing violence against children in schools.

3. Publications on benefits of violence-free society, peace building and conflict management should be distributed in schools and communities.
4. Teachers are the professional group who works directly where school violence takes place and who spends the most time with both bullies, victims and bystanders. Thus, whether and how teachers intervene in the case of bullying is of great importance.
5. Administrators should made the teaching of empathy and anger management compulsory by introducing them into the curricula of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. This will entrench in the youth the ability to manage anger when infuriated and also have love for others as they love themselves. Thus, the global culture of violence will be curbed and in so doing the gains of globalization will fully be enjoyed in Nigeria and the world at large.

In conclusion, massive awareness should be created on violence against children with a view to facilitating preventive actions as well as encourage reporting of acts of violence by learners.

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