

Chapter 4

Violence in Nigerian Secondary Schools: Implications for Educational Management and Sustainable Development



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Abstract This paper explores violence in Nigerian secondary schools. School violence has recently emerged as a widespread scenario and a major concern globally. In Nigeria, hardly does a day pass without an officially or unofficially report of one form of violence witnessed in schools and manifesting in different pedestal such as bullying, shooting, sexual harassment, and kidnapping, among many others. The study is situated on violence in Nigeria secondary schools. The focus is on taking hindsight as it historically overviewed the state of art in the area of study. It pressed further with a critical examination of the types of violence prevalent in Nigerian secondary schools. A detailed touch on the above highlighted the educational implication on secondary education and national development. Based on the educational implication of the findings, the paper suggests among others that government should redesign the curriculum to equip students with twenty-first century skills to reduce overdependence on government jobs.

Keywords Violence · Secondary school · Impact · Educational management · Sustainable · Development

Introduction

Violence is a behavior involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, and kill which can lead to death, anger, aggressiveness, depression, and emotional trauma among other consequences. It is a global phenomenon that has been substantiated with evidence from researcher's violence (Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Labaree, 1997; Netshitangani, 2017). In Nigeria, violence is prevalent as there have been

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cases of violence reported by news media houses, (television channels and radio stations) and print media against children, for example, child labor, torture, kidnapping, bullying, genital mutilations, shootings, sexual harassment, rape, and corporal punishment, which have resulted in stigmatizations, discriminations, racism, tribalism, and inequalities witnessed today in schools (Ogundipe & Obinna, 2007).

In another study, the International Labour Organization (ILO) report of 2001 showed that 218 million of school-aged children were involved in various forms of violence which include, but are not limited to, child labor, trafficking, and sexual harassments (Federal Ministry Education, 2007). This paper dwells on the violence experienced in secondary schools in Nigeria, types and implications on national development, and the way forward.

Violence in Nigerian Secondary Schools

Violence is a common scenario in the school settings considering the fact that school is a conglomeration of students from diverse family backgrounds, ethnicity, and religion who have come under one community called school for the acquisition of knowledge. It is a global issue that affects one of the core institutions of modern society to a varying degree in virtually all countries of the world.

In Nigerian schools, violence has gotten to an alarming rate in the twenty-first century with high number of deaths and level of injuries inflicted on students which has also been associated with adverse peer group influences, poor home training, failure of government to provide palliative alternatives, and churches failing in their duties to preach love and patience. Today also, violence in secondary schools is now both external and internal like the cases of the abduction of about 300 final year students from Chibok in 2014 and 190 students from Dapchi in 2017 by Boko Haram insurgents in the northeast part of Nigeria (News Agency of Nigeria, 2018; UN Child Fund, 2018). These incidents attracted both national and international condemnations.

There are still many other cases of violence on students that are not global knowledge. The physical, psychological, and emotional torture and victimization that students in secondary schools face cannot be quantified. Violence has been variously defined as unlawful exercise of physical force on individual/individuals. It is any behavior that aims at harming others in the school. Astor, Benbenishty, and Estrada (2009), the American Educational Research Association (AERA, 2013), Pitner, Marachi, Astor, and Benbenishty (2015), and Tamuno (1991) described school violence as encompassing all the physical (fighting, corporal punishment), sexual (rape, sexual harassments of all forms), and psychological (verbal abuse of a sort) and bullying (cyberbullying, carrying of weapons, guns and knives). Domenach (1978) viewed the term from three perspectives: psychological, involving irrational and murderous use of force; ethical, involving vandalism of a neighbor's property or an abuse of his/her liberty; and political, involving forceful seizure of power or the illegitimate use of political power. According to the World Health Organization

(WHO, 2002), violence is the use of physical force, power, threat, or action against oneself, another person, or against a group of persons which has the propensity of resulting in death, injury, psychological harm, underdevelopment, or deprivation. Violence in schools involves a continuum of behaviors ranging from bullying to more serious cases (Ferguson, Miguel, Kilburn, & Sanchez, 2007). Summarily put, school violence is any behavior that is intended to harm other people at schools, within the school, or around the school premises. This may include bullying and victimization or more severe forms of violence involving weapons.

Historical Overview

The incidence of violence in Nigeria schools is no longer global news. Evidences abound in the society. The question is what led us to where we are now? In the early days of secondary schooling, there was nothing like violence, at least comparative to what obtains today. Then secondary education was taken very seriously being the acceptable qualification for good jobs and also a link to higher opportunities. Students of secondary schools were very respectful, obedient, humble, and very eager to render help to others no matter how small. There was respect for human dignity, service to human kind, and selflessness because that was what the family, the church, and the schools had independently impacted on them: good values and respect to elders which border on our culture as Africans. Parents whose children were in secondary schools were highly regarded as having impacted good values in their children. Those parents were gainfully employed either by the government or by self (farmers, traders, etc.). The churches kept on preaching love, forgiveness, and contentment. Students during holidays got involved in community services, visiting the elderly and poor by providing needed help and organizing meetings through the age grade to teach others good virtues. They engaged in meaningful things that exposed in them useful living which made them useful members of the society as is one of the cardinal objectives of secondary education. These students were proud of their background and very contented with themselves. According to Ocho (2005) during the nineteenth century in Nigeria, unity and tranquility were the hallmark of every group then (student unions, age grade).

Each secondary school was interested in bringing the best out of their students to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, democratic, and sovereign nation founded on the principle of freedom, equality, and justice that was the broad philosophy of the Nigerian education (FRN, 2004). These continued until this decade when there is a disconnection between the family, the church, the school, and the government. The economic situation has put a huge stress on parents to meet up with the basic needs of the family. Parents are now engaged almost 24 h a day simply to make ends meet. Some families leave their children under the company of house girls/boys to act as guardians. The housemaids in quote have nothing meaningful to impact on the children left under their care.

The churches now preach money instead of good virtues (Bruser & Chung, 2007; Ogba & Igu, 2013; Ocho, 2005). The government on their own part is equally confused as there is the problem of political instability which makes the implementation of secondary education policies abysmal. Every government that comes in power tries to fashion out their own ideology on the running of educational sector (Ivowi, 2001; Ocho, 2005; Okorie, 2005). There are instructional problems as government keeps on changing educational policies frequently. Initially, we had 6-5-4 system of education; meaning 6 years in primary, 5 years in secondary, and 4 years in the university. In the late 1980s, it was changed to 6-3-3-4 system. Now it is 9-3-4, that is, 6 years of primary, 3 years of junior secondary, 3 years of senior secondary, and 4 years in the university.

The curriculum design used did not help matters as it failed to equip its grand-aunts with the needed requisite skills for self-reliance. Based on the above narration, one may not be wrong to theorize that what we are suffering from is poverty of the mind (due to frustrations) which has been the bane of the violence witnessed at all the corners of the country. There is economic poverty; parents cannot meet their obligations as required of them, leaving their children unguided as they move to satellite towns to look for something to do in order to pay their school fees. Getting to Lagos, Port Harcourt, Anambra, Kano, Kaduna, and other major commercial cities during the holidays, one will find thousands of children hawking on major streets, neglected, abandoned, and exposed to different hazards and threats because they have no alternatives than what they have found themselves in. The frustrations posed by these harsh environmental experiences have caused social life, which is one of the most important influences of our mental health and positive and durable relationship with both our minds and bodies, to fall apart cumulating into obscured thinking and hatred, intimidation, and harassments of all kinds. Hence, social poverty occurs as they cannot meet up with what is expected of them as well as institutional poverty as the institutions cannot give direction for tomorrow. Therefore, peer groupings begin to play an influential role, and the children were left with no option than to join gangs and hence the escalation of violence in schools.

Types of Violence in Nigerian Schools

School violence has evolved in various forms over the past years, ranging from bullying to gangsterism, cyberbullying, and the use of sophisticated weapons such as guns, knives, and axes. Recently, attention of the public has been drawn to the lethal and traumatic shootings in various schools across the country. This has attracted public discussions at various quarters about violence that is ravaging the school system. School violence can be classified as:

Bullying/Victimization

This type of violence is very common in schools. The victims of bullying suffer physical, psychological, and emotional traumas from the perpetrators. According to Ttofi, Farrington, and Loeber (2011), it is the repeated psychological oppression of the less powerful person by a more powerful person over a period of time. Its significant effect endures for a period of time.

In Nigeria, bullying is meted on teachers by students, students by teachers, students by co-students, or even parents against teachers or students. There have been several cases of students beating up their teachers simply because a student failed promotion examination. There are some cases where students beat fellow students purple and blue and other cases of parents either insulting or beating up a teacher for correcting their child. In Ebonyi State, Nigeria, parents of a student in one of the secondary schools beat a biology teacher into a stupor for rebuking their child for bullying a fellow student.

A group of boys in a particular state forced a student out of school because she refused to have sex with one of them, and they made it a point of duty to beat her three times in a week. From there the girl stopped attending school since she cannot bear the trauma. In Lagos State, a girl named Ada was rushed to hospital from school because of head injury she suffered from a classmate who bullied her. On 4 December 2017, in Anambra State, Nigeria, a teacher of one secondary school was beaten to death by parents and brothers for flogging a student who rudely refused to sweep the classroom (Okogba, 2018).

These are common scenarios in most parts of Nigeria. Some scholars have proved that outside the obvious pains that accompany incidences of violence such as immediate pain, there are other negative experiences that are worse like depression, low self-esteem, loneliness, anxiety, absenteeism in school, student dropout, poor academic performance, and suicidal ideation (Espelage & Napolitano, 2003). Students who suffered bullying in school find it difficult to socialize even after schooling. This is in line with the Omisore et al. (2012) who report that the victims of school violence are injured psychologically, emotionally, and socially and have behavioral disorder as manifestation of posttraumatic stress/disorder, failure in associating with peers, high aggression, and the use of psychoactive substances.

In a survey conducted by Ogundipe and Obinna (2007) on violence in Nigerian schools, their findings revealed that physical violence was 85%, psychological violence 50%, gender-based violence 5%, health-related violence 1%, and sexual violence 4%. They further compared violence based on locality and reported that physical violence in secondary schools located in rural areas accounts for 90% and urban areas 80%. On the issue of staff perpetrating psychological violence on students, it was recorded 26.4%. In terms of level, it was discovered that senior students perpetrating physical violence on junior student are 4.9% and classmate 4.7% (Ogundipe & Obinna, 2007). Reporting violence based on school type in Nigeria, Omisore et al. (2012) found that private schools have less than 25% violent cases compared with public schools.

Cyberbullying

This is a new form of violence whereby technology is used to cause emotional and psychological threat on students. It is found to be predominant in all schools in the world. It occurs due to ostentatious means of assuming power, revenge, boredom, jealousy, or emotional torture. This form of violence is rampant among juvenile/adolescent age groups. The victims of cyberbullying experience multiple negative outcomes and emotional harassments which culminate into harmful behaviors such as lying, threatening, masking ID, and defamation. Cyberbullying involves hurting a peer using information technology by sending harassing messages and posting discrediting comments or pictures on a social media platform (Smith et al., 2008).

According to Turan, Polat, Karapirli, and Turan (2011), the Internet, like other information technology tools, has features of both positivity and negativity. Cyberbullying is meant to harm individuals deliberately through the use of electronic device. For instance, in Edo State, a student committed suicide because a fellow student videoed her with the boyfriend unknowingly to her, and she was devastated when the video went viral. In my own State Ebonyi, a student was forcibly videoed nude, and her perpetrator sent the video via YouTube. But for the quick intervention of good-spirited individuals and the efforts of the state government, the girl might have committed suicide as well because she is an orphan. There are unending stories surrounding cyberbullying and its aftereffects on their victims.

Corporal Punishments

One of the causes of violence in Nigerian schools is the use of corporal punishment. It causes physical, psychological, and emotional pains to the victims. This is an aged-long culture in schools where erring students are flogged by teachers or senior students who have been delegated with authority. Students are beaten on their buttocks, head, hands, and faces either by teachers or fellow students in the name of discipline. Teachers are one of the most perpetrators of the first incidence of physical violence in schools. There is a case that was reported that a teacher asked a student to solve a mathematical equation in class. The poor student couldn't do it. The teacher now threatened her that she will be beaten mercilessly. Upon the threat, the teacher picked a long big cane and aimed at the student's head, lashing her with several strokes at both head and face after which she yelled at her, idiot go and have your seat. Upon reaching home, the student was down with fever; she was rushed to the hospital, after 2 days the student was declared blind, and the school authority denied knowledge of it. A study titled Violence Against Children Survey (VACS), conducted in 2014 by the UNICEF, found out that six out of every ten children experience different kinds of violence, more than half of which is physical (Lawal, 2017). Dunne, Humphreys, and Leach (2006) reported that corporal punishment is part of the norm in school life in many developing countries which Nigeria is not

immune to. There are a lot of literatures which have documented its uses and abuses in Nigerian secondary schools (Al-Shihab, 2006; Daniels, Bradley, & Hays, 2007).

Lawal (2017) corroborates that students have been maimed and sometimes incapacitated. He further stated that unless corporal punishment is completely prohibited in public and private schools, youths may grow with psychological and physical memories that will result in various cycles of violence. In data collected in 2010 under “round 4” of the UNICEF, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS4) program recorded that 91% of children aged 14 years (UNICEF, 2014a, 2014b) experienced physical and psychological violence through aggression meted on them in the name of discipline. This act is carried out either by a slap on the head, ear, and face or hit with an object or being yelled at, screamed at, and/or insulted.

Beyond Africa, there are some studies done in Israel (Benbenishty, Zeira, Astor, & Koury-Kassabri, 2002), South Asia (UNICEF, 2001), and Europe (Smith, 2003). It is true that corporal punishment is somehow allowed so long as it is administered moderately and fairly in schools, but there are some regulations guiding it which is frequently contravened in Nigeria with students reportedly being pushed, slapped, and kicked.

Peer Pressure

A peer group is a social group that consists of individuals with the same age bracket and social status who share similar interest. Peer influence remains one of the major predictors of school violence. Children who develop friendships with antisocial peers in secondary schools are at high risk of participating in violent behavioral activities. Peers are a very powerful influence in the onset of delinquent and violent acts. In the environment this work is based on students imitating their peers in their way of life: mode of dressing, walking steps, eating habits, and dancing styles. Families do not have much control on such students because most times negative behaviors have been found to have influence on positivity when it comes to peer-group relationships. At this level, most of them will take to alcoholism, cigarette, and other hard substances to enable them to move away from shyness. To gain respect from their peers, they will begin to participate in violent activities such as physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual harassment, and deprivation, and from there they will begin to join a gang to be more vibrant.

Gangsterism

Students in secondary schools join gangs which is associated with delinquency at an early stage of life. At this level, you find students drinking alcohol, smoking, and taking drugs which make them be involved in indecent behaviors that are tantamount to violence. According to Nalah and Audu (2014), students between the ages

of 7 and 20 years drink alcohol, smoke Indian hemp, and carry dangerous weapons. They, on many occasions, forcefully harass fellow students/pupils sexually, drug abuse in children: cigarette cannabis, antibiotics, tobacco, Alabukun (local analgesic), caffeine, tramadol, and hypno-sedatives. The observation supports the earlier report of Nalah and Audu (2014), Fatoye and Morakinyo (2002) who stated that the use of hard substances anechoic, stimulants hypno-sedatives, tobaccos among students in urban and rural school in Nigeria is alarming. The problem of gangsterism is associated with assaults, killings, robbery, extortion, multiple raping, maiming, and kidnapping. School shooting and suicides that are two extreme cases found today in secondary schools are as a result of gangsterism.

Nowadays, students come to school with dangerous weapons to unleash terror on teachers and fellow students who failed to join in their gangs. Some of the students who refused are either made to pay a certain amount “fuck up fee” every month for their freedom or face the consequences (Idowu, 2014). This issue is quite disturbing as school administrators, parents, teachers, students, and the general public are confounded with fear. The trend has worsened now that the major cult groups have extended their modus operandi to secondary schools in order to initiate students into the junior cult group.

There was this incident reported by Nigeria Police at Ebonyi State, Nigeria, where they foiled the initiation of 46 secondary school students by a popular cult group known as “Vikings” (Eze, 2015). The senior Vikings in the university want to have junior Vikings in the secondary schools. But the quick intervention of the Nigerian Police Force who swooped in on them follows a tip-off. The police command expressed regrets over such incident and announced that they will embark on sensitization campaign to secondary schools in the state to enlighten students on the need to shun gangsterism. The command noted with dismay that if these occurrences are allowed (i.e., big cults in the universities such as Vikings, Sea Dogs, Black Axes, etc.) to initiate junior ones in the secondary schools, it will escalate violent crimes such as kidnapping, robbery, and killing, among other social ills associated with violence. There is no gain stating the obvious that the culture of gangsterism has gone the ladder to secondary schools and is gathering momentum. Today thousands of teenagers have been exposed to various aspects of violence. This ugly trend has not only contributed to moral decadence but increased the spate of violence in the country which its cumulative effect is the economy, masquerading the public with overwhelming fear that occasionally bring mysterious illness, disputes, threats, and death. Serious academic activities can hardly be undertaken in such climate as suspicion becomes the order of the day.

The Implications of Violence on Education

Education is the foundation of all development in a society. The impact of school violence in education is very grave considering that while educational authorities strive to increase access to schools, violence dwindles school attendance and

increases the dropout rate. The impact of school violence is both physical and psychological on both the students and staff. Violence brings about posttraumatic stress, substance abuse, antisocial behaviors, aggressiveness, and anxiety due to emotional torture. The above observation makes it difficult for those who have gone through violence to assess social cues and an inability to comprehend complex social roles (De Bellis, 2001). Daniels et al. (2007) reported that biological and psychobiological effects affect hypo-arousal as children are exposed to violence and have a lower resistance which may have the effect of desensitizing children to acts of violence. The impact will be witnessed in the decline in school attendance, increase to divert behavioral problems, and low academic performance. Delaney et al. (2002) found that children exposed to violence have low IQs which affects their cognition negatively resulting in difficulty with their concentration and memory, hence low intellectual ability. Students and staff who have been under violence are definitely going to have shock due to emotional distress and thus problems functioning. This may not only create fears in them but also make them develop negative attitude to life. Teachers who are under anxiety, depression, and somatic symptoms may be functioning unprofessionally, have low efficacy in the classroom performance, and have lower emotional well-being. According to Okeahialam (2015), Ahamadau Abba, a teacher at Jajiri Government Day School in Maiduguri, stated that:

I have been a teacher for 29 years now but am always afraid to attend class due to violence exposed to and most of our colleagues have been killed or injured.

In such dangerous repercussion, finding teachers who will teach in such region becomes a problem, and student's school attendance will drop. By early 2016 as reported by Achineku (2016), an estimation of 952,029 school-aged children have fled the violence with little to no access to education.

Violence and National Development

School violence is the act of destroying school facilities, causing pain on students, staff, and even the community where the school is located. Violence in schools has a potential to discourage students as well as negate the principle of student-friendly schooling and hence increased absenteeism, school dropouts, poor completion rate, poor academic achievement, as well as long-term implication of threat and security. The implication of the above observation to the national development is poor economy. The country will be submerged with people who have nothing meaningful to offer to the economy, just as water has overflowed its bank destroying people's life and property, and so is violence. The national policy describes education as an instrument for national development, which lays the integration for national development and interaction of persons. This laudable statement can only thrive in an environment that is safe and secure, and when that happens, the authors believe that love, peace, and tranquility become the order. The economic development of such environment will increase.

Obviously, Nigeria has a viable and diversified economy with great potentialities for development given the size of its markets and substantial resources, but violence has impacted much on the nation's economy. Violence in the school system can transcend to full-blown crises if not checked. There was an incident that happened in the 1990s in the old Anambra State where two communities clashed, destroying property worth millions because two students fought (Gaye, 1999). This disrupted the economic activities and reduced the per capita income as business activity was disrupted and farming abandoned as villages took to their heels. Parents of the students were asked to pay for the damages, and government also contributed money to help in procuring the damaged school equipment. These are monies that would have been used in solving some educational issues in areas to boost the economy but were misappropriated.

The money that would have been channeled to another yearning project was now diverted to replace already-destroyed facilities in the school. Secondary education is very strategic in a nation's national development not only because it is a bridge between primary and university levels of education but also because it supplies lower level manpower to all profession which boost the economy of that nation. The overall philosophy of Nigerian education is to "live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice" (FRN, 2004, p. 8). This is achievable where social value (respect for human right, humility, and tolerance, among others) is upheld. Where the reverse is the case, its impact affects the functionality of the government and the entire system.

The second stanza of the Nigeria's national anthem states as follows:

Oh God of creation, direct our noble cause. Guide our leaders right, help our youths the truth to know. In love and honesty to grow and live just and true. Great lofty height attains. To build a nation where peace and justice shall reign. (Metrolyrics, 2018, p. 1)

The first line is a plea to God to help maintain our value system and way of life. The second line is for our leaders to be upright and take decision devoid of rancor and hatred, while our youths should be endowed with knowledge and understanding to know the truth to enable them grow in love and honesty to attain an enviable height, to build a nation where peace and justice shall reign. This is the prayer of all patriotic Nigerians. However, the trend at which secondary school violence is moving is capable of casting a dark shadow over the prospect for a peaceful, united, secure, and prosperous society as Nigeria. To drive home this assertion, the World Bank (2003) states that violence leads to poverty, and poverty and violence are intricate and interrelated, and they retard economic and social development of a nation. Conclusively, violence at any level of education is an enemy to the national development. Firstly, it has social consequences which bring tension on people. Secondly, it has economic consequences which center on poverty and unemployment. Thirdly, it has a political consequence which brings about marginalization, deprivation, and injustice to others.

Conclusions

Violence in schools has been referred to as consisting of undesirable behavior that brings about threat capable of causing emotional, psychological, and physical trauma on individual students, or groups, which results into frustrations, intimidation, stigmatization, death, and injuries and hence low academic performance, absenteeism, school dropout, and low completion rates. Scholars have provided valuable insights into causes of violence in schools. These are home factors, teacher's attitudes, lack of enforcement of the school rules and regulations, peer pressure, and the use of corporal punishment (Astor et al., 2009; Daniels et al., 2007; Lawal, 2017). The aftereffect is witnessed on school absenteeism, poor academic achievement, lack of value, and poor economy. School authorities should advocate for proper/proactive management strategy of school violence as poor management will not only negatively impact on quality of academic achievement but also degenerate to multiplicity of harmful effect on emotional and physical well-being of teachers, students, and others.

Recommendations for Consideration

Addressing this hydra-headed monster called violence in secondary schools, all hands must be on deck to promote school safety and prevention mechanism that will curb the menace since it has attracted the attention of every stakeholder – the public, politicians, educators, and even social groups. Therefore, parents, churches, and government and nongovernmental organizations should collectively join hands with the school authority in the fight against school-based violence and other social vices.

1. The government should articulate educational policies that will equip its grandaunts with the twenty-first-century skills and vigorously pursue how it will create self-employment and reduce overdependence on government for employment.
2. Guidance and counseling units should be made compulsory and functional in every secondary school.
3. Teachers should be trained properly to take the mantle of teaching. In-service training should be made available to those who are already in the system. Teachers should be motivated intrinsically and extrinsically by providing them with accommodation, rewarding those that have done well, and enhancing their salary to enable them to teach with happiness.
4. The school authority should ensure friendly rules and regulations that are not stringent in nature. They should ensure consistency in the application of rules and regulations and be fair and equitable in administering discipline. This will help in maintaining an environment that is conducive and congenial for learning, as this will help students to thrive.

5. The government needs to formulate educational policies that will promote economic growth and development.

The church has to sit up and preach love, forgiveness, and oneness as those virtues will help to work on the children's psyche and change their perception about education. Workshops, seminars, and conferences should be organized occasionally on the evil consequences of violence, and peace education should be made compulsory as one of the prerequisites for employment.

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