

DETERMINANTS AND PERCEIVED EFFECTS OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ABAK LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF AKWA IBOM STATE

Akpan G. Enomfon, Ekpu F. S. & Udo, H. I.

Dept. of Physical and Health Education, University of Uyo, Nigeria

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to find out determinants and perceived effects of school violence in secondary schools in Abak Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The study sought to determine the causes of school violence from home, community, and school environments, and the effects of school violence among the students. The study adopted an ex-post-facto survey design. A sample of 40 teachers from the 12 Secondary schools in the area was selected by random sampling for the study. A structured questionnaire dully validated by three experts and the reliability also established for the collection of data was used. The data collected were analysed using simple percentages to answer the research questions. The findings were used to conclude that violent homes, violent communities, and violent school environment would significantly cause school violence among the students. The effects significantly include bad image to school and non-patronage by parents while teachers and students would feel unsafe for proper academic pursuits. Recommendations were that government and school management should embark on frequent peer education for the students' good character formation and providing security in schools.

Key words: *School, Violence, Causes, Effects, Students.*

Introduction

School violence encompasses physical violence, including student-on-student fighting and corporal punishment; psychological violence, including verbal abuse; sexual violence including rape and sexual harassment; many forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying and carrying weapons to school (*United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO 2017*). Violence is widely held to have become a serious problem in recent decades in many countries, especially when weapons such as guns or knives are involved. It includes violence between school students as well as physical attacks by students on school staff.

School violence is any activity that can create a disturbance in an educational system. It is not just school shootings. It includes verbal and physical altercations. It is also bullying through electronic means and social media, threats, weapon use, or gang activity. School violence can also be defined as

physical or verbal altercation on the way to school, on the way home from school, or at a school-sponsored event that can cause physical or psychological harm to another individual, school, or community (Benneth-Johnson, 2014).

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2012) defined violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation”. From the definition, school violence could be described to be physical attacks between students or by students on school staff, which could occur on the way to or from school/school-sponsored events, on the school premises or at a school sponsored even. School violence is a public health problem and may take the form of bullying, shooting, brawls and a host of other physical abuses.

Larsen (2013), reported that an American television network had reported on its history website that the worst high school shooting in U.S history was the Columbine high school massacre of April 20 1999, which occurred at Columbine High School in Columbine, Colorado.

The perpetrators, reportedly two senior students, murdered a total of 12 students and one teacher; injuring 21 additional people, after which the pair then committed suicide. Proving that school violence is indeed a global threat, the National School Safety Center according to the Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF, 1997), recorded that one of the worst cases of school violence also occurred in Beslan, Russia, in 2004, with 350 people killed, half of whom were children. Seeing that history has recorded many gruesome cases of school violence around the world, there is need to find out what caused school violence around the world and the possible solutions to school violence. School violence is a multi-faceted social ill and may occur for diverse reasons, one of which is the intake of hard substances such as drugs and alcohol abuse by the students (Benneth-Johnson, 2014). Students, school staff or members of the society who are intoxicated tend to lose control of their inhibitions and often act in an irrational manner. Hence, the effect of drugs on the human body can serve as a catalyst for school violence.

Embry (2012); Baumrind, Larzelere and Cowan (2012) also noted that home environment contributes to school violence. Gershoff (2012b) had noted that harsh parental discipline is associated with higher levels of aggressive tendencies in youth (Bennett-Johnson, 2014). Also, in homes where parents/guardians display violent behaviour, children/wards usually adopt violence as a way of asserting authority.

A study by Wiesner and Windle (2004) and Evans (2004) showed neighbourhoods and communities provide the context for school violence. Communities with high rates of crime and drug use teach youth the violent

behaviours that are carried into schools according to Tack and Chan (2017) and Guerra (2013). Children in violent neighborhoods tend to perceive that their communities are risky, and that these feelings of vulnerability are carried over to the school environment (Casteel, Peek-Asa and LIMBOS, 2007). They found that teacher assault by students was more likely to occur in schools located in high-crime neighbourhoods; and that exposure to deviant peers is a risk factor for high levels of aggression accordingly. Evans (2004) has shown that poverty and high population densities are associated with higher rates of school violence, he also found that children's exposure to community violence during the early elementary school years increases the risk of aggression later in elementary school, as reported by teachers and classmates. Gangs use the social environment of the school to recruit members and interact with opposing groups, with gang violence carrying over from neighbourhoods into some schools. Alternatively, many children who grow up in violent neighbourhoods learn to deliberately find and make 'street-oriented' friends as an instrumental tactic used to avoid being victimized by others.

Brock, Nickerson, Reeves, Jimerson, Lieberinan and Feinberg, (2013; and Schonfeld 2016) observed that school environment to school violence. Limbos and Casteel, (2008); and Casteel, *et al.* (2007), had noted that teachers' assaults are associated with a higher percentage male factor, a higher proportion of male students, and a higher proportion of students receiving free or reduced cost lunch (an indicator of poverty). In general, a large male population, and a history of high levels of disciplinary problems in the school, including urban location are related to violence in schools, Hirschi and Hindelang (1977) earlier noted that in students, academic performance is inversely related to antisocial conduct; while class size and teacher to students' ratio where students are overcrowded in the class would lessen effective control of students. These authors had suggested schools should set into action strong disciplinary measures which perpetrators of the act will face, if they fail to abide by the institution's rules and regulations.

Another cause of school violence may be personality problems (Bandura, 1983). The author noted shyness, for instance, may cause a student to feel out of place amongst his peers, thereby influencing him to be rebellious or to try to get noticed by any means. Such behaviour may also result in bullying and gang fights. Furthermore, school violence may arise due to psychological deficiencies created by dysfunctional homes (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). Worry, hatred, inferiority complex, anger and other negative emotions which fuel violent behaviour, could develop in people when they are exposed to poor parenting or discord among family members. The impact of violent television programs and video games is underestimated in the society (Bushman & Huesmann, 2011). Children/teenagers often emulate their favourite television characters action movies and this leads to learned violent behaviours in schools.

Those who commit school violence attacks include staff members, members of the community, and current and former students.

The consequences of school violence are grave; as extreme cases have led to the loss of human lives. Other effects of school violence include vandalism and loss of property especially school facilities, moral decadence, poor human capital development, increase in crime rate, erosion of cultural values and bad reputation for schools as well as societies.

From 1990 until present day, there has been an increase in school violence but the reasons why the offenders commit violence are not always known. Also, the government in some parts of the world-especially first-world countries permits weapons such as guns to be made more accessible in households (Larsen, 2013). Teenagers are able to gain access to sharp objects and dangerous arms, which they take to school and use to intimidate their peers. In addition to this, the legal system in any area-especially third-world countries-is yet to develop specific laws that will help curb school violence and make it an offence punishable by the law (UNESCO, 2017).

Having identified some major causes of school violence, it is imperative to proffer solutions to this social ill. The effects are very serious including loss of lives and property of students and of the school. According to Gershoff, (2012a), parents/guardians have a key role to play as they should ensure that the atmosphere at home, where the child/ward is nurtured is violent-free.

School violence is not a new concept. It has been documented as early as 1927 (Bushman & Huesmann, 2011) when Andrew Khoe set bombs off at a school in Bath, Michigan. Khoe killed himself and several others. The report further added that in 1959, Paul Oregon set off a bomb at a playground in Texas that killed himself along with teachers and students. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has recorded 272 school violence incidents from the early 1900s until present day according to UNESCO (2017) report. School violence is occurring more and more at the grade school and high school levels (Gershoff, 2012b), just as it occurs at the university levels; hence the need to study school violence from the secondary schools' perspective. Secondary schools in Abak Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State are both in urban and rural areas where many students live both on and off the school campuses. Thus the homes, communities and school environments help to shape the students physically, socially and psychologically. Parents send their children to gain knowledge and learn and should not have to worry about their children being safe at school. By the interaction with these variables, violent nature can be learnt and adopted by children around the environments and taken to schools. It is on this premise that the study sought to find out the determinants and perceived effects of school violence in Abak Local Government Area.

Research Questions

The following research questions were generated to guide the study:

1. Will home environment be a determinant of school violence in Abak Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?
2. Will host community environment be a determinant of school violence in Abak Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?
3. Does prevailing school environment be a determinant of school violence in Abak Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?
4. What are the perceived effects of school violence among students in Abak Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?

Methodology

An *expost facto* survey design was adopted for the study. This design was considered because it allowed for the measurement of a number of variables in their natural setting where the data were already there. The study area was Abak Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State; Abak is surrounded by Oruk Anam, Uyo, Etinan and Essien Udim Local Government Areas.

The population of the study included all the principals and class teachers in the 12 public secondary schools in Abak L.G.A. Eight schools were randomly selected for the study, eight principals of schools were selected; then 16 male teachers and 16 female teachers were selected from each school for the study. A total of 40 teachers were therefore randomly selected as the sample for the study. The instrument used for data collected in this study was a self-structured questionnaire framed in line with the objectives of the study and research questions. The instrument had two sections; "A" and "B". Section "A" was for the demographic data of the respondents while section "B" was designed to collect data on the independent variables. A 2-point rating scale [in YES or NO] was to collect responses from the subjects of the study.

To ensure the logical and content validity of the instrument, the self-structured questionnaire was scrutinised by experts in Physical and Health Education, University of Uyo. The reliability of the instrument was established using split-half method. Twenty teachers from Uyo Local Government Area which is outside the study area were used for the pilot study. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to compute the reliability coefficient obtained at 0.86. The instrument was considered reliable to be used for the study. The data generated for the study were analysed using simple percentages (%) to interpret the study's research questions.

Data Analyses and Results

To analyse, simple percentages were used.

Table 1: Percentage analysis of demographic data of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Principals – male	6	15
Principals –female	2	5
Teachers – male	16	40
Teachers – female	16	40
Grand total	40	100

Research Question 1: Will home environment be a determinant of school violence in Abak Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?

Table 2: Analysis of home environment as a determinant of violence as perceived by the respondents

Items	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total	Decision
Parental violent lifestyles can induce violent behaviour in children and taken to school.	34(85)	6(15)	40	Yes
Home without discipline can breed violent behaviour in children and taken to school.	38(95)	2(5)	40	
Parental abuse on children can trigger violence in children and taken to school	34(85)	6(15)	40	
Weak and ineffective ties of children with the parents can cause violence and taken to school	36(90)	4(10)	40	
Grand total of no. of responses	142 (75)	18 (25)	160	

The result in table 2 shows that 142 (75%) responses supported that home environment was a determinant of violence among students; while only 18 (25) respondents did not support the statement. The finding is that majority of the respondents agreed that home environment can be the determinant of school violence among students.

Research Question 2: Will host community environment be a determinant of school violence in Abak Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?

Table 3: Analysis of community environment as determinant of school violence as perceived by the respondents

Items	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total	Decision
Children in crime prone area are subject to violent behaviour in children and taken to school	38(95)	2(5)	40	Yes
Overcrowded housing environment can cause violent behaviour in children and taken to school	38(95)	2(5)	40	
Gangsterism in neighbourhood can cause violent behaviour in children and taken to school	37 (92.5)	3(7.5)	40	
Exposure to criminal acts and violent movies can cause violent behaviour in children and taken to school	33 (85)	6(15)	40	
Grand total of no. of responses	147(91.9)	13 (8.1)	160	

The result in table 3 shows that 147 (91.9%) responses supported that community environment can be a determinant of school violence among students. While only 13 (8.1%) responses did not support that community environment can be a determinant of school violence among students. Therefore the finding is that the majority of the respondents agreed that community environment can positively be determinant of school violence among students.

Research Question 3: Does prevailing school environment be a determinant of school violence in Abak Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State

Table 4: Analysis of prevailing school environment as determinant of school violence as perceived by the respondents

Items	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total	Decision
Teachers assault/abuse on students trigger school violence among students	30 (75)	10(25)	40	Yes
Ineffective school discipline/punishment of bullying students can trigger school violence among students	32 (80)	8 (20)	40	
Ineffective security services in school can cause school violence among students	31 (77.5)	9 (22.5)	40	
School location can cause school violence among students	36 (90)	4(10)	40	
Grand total of no. of responses	129(80.6)	31 (19.4)	106	

The result in table 4 shows that 129 (80.6%) responses supported that school environment can be a determinant of school violence among the students. The

finding is that the majority of the respondents agreed school environment can be a determinant of school violence among students.

Research Question 4: What are the perceived effects of school violence among students in Abak Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?

Table 5: Analysis of effects of school violence as perceived by the respondents

Items	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total	Decision
School violence promotes bad image to the school and the area	31(7.5)	9 (22.5)	40	Yes
Teachers/student would feel unsafe	32 (80)	8 (20)	40	
The abused children may live emotionally with reprisal attitude to cause violence to others	32(80)	8(20)	40	
The school would lose positive patronage by parents	33 (82.5)	7 (17.5)	40	
Grand total of no. of responses	128 (120)	32 (20)	160	

The result in table 5 shows that 128 (120) responses agreed that there are effects of school violence among the students; while only 32 (20%) responses did not support that there are majority of the respondents who agreed that there are negative effects of school violence among students.

Discussion of Findings

Findings are discussed here to affirm the causes and effect of violence in secondary schools in Abak Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State. Table 2 is a direct reflection of home environment was a determinant of violence in secondary schools in Abak Local Government Area 88.2 percent respondents agreed that home environment can be a determinant of violence in schools. This agrees with Embry (2012a) and Bennett-Johnson (2014) who had the same notion. In table 3, the assessment of community environment as a determinant of school violence indicates positive response, 91.9 percent respondents agreed on community environment as a determinant of school violence while 8.1 percent disagreed. This agrees with Casteel *et al.* (Yean, 2008) who indicated that home environment contributes to violence in schools. This also affirms the assertion of Evans in 2004 that high population densities are associated with school violence.

In table 4, 75 percent of the respondents agreed on teachers assault/abuse on students to trigger school violence while 25 percent disagreed; 80 percent agreed on ineffective school discipline/punishment or bullying students while 20 percent disagreed. Also 77.5 percent agreed on ineffective security services in

schools as a cause of violence, 22.5 percent disagreed. 80.3 percent agreed on school environment as a cause of school violence. In agreement, Limbos *et al.* (Yean, 2008) noted teachers' assault to be associated with school violence. Casteel *et al.* was also of the opinion that locating school in an urban area is related to violence in schools.

The analysis in table 5 indicates 120 percent responses supporting that school violence affects students while 20 percent disagreed. This agrees with UNESCO (2017) that teacher/students would feel unsafe in the school. Cowan and Paine (2015) also supported the view. According to Bushman and Fluesman (2011), school violence leads to loss of human lives, vandalism and loss of property especially school facilities, moral decadence, poor human capital development, and increase in crime rate, erosion of cultural values and bad reputation for schools as well as societies.

Conclusion

From the study findings the conclusion reached is that the home, environment, community or neighbourhood environment and school environment would significantly cause school violence among students with far reaching negative effects including emotional disturbance, fear, loss of patronage by parents and bad image to the school and community.

Based on the findings discussed and conclusion reached in this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The school management should have all students partake often in Comprehensive Peer Education to educate students on conflict resolution among them and teachers.
2. School authorities should put up an effective monitoring security services in the class rooms and out of the class rooms,
3. Parental lifestyles that promote peace and security should be encouraged
4. The church should have the responsibility of encouraging the youths to be free from indulging in violence.

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