



Familial Dysfunctionality and School Going Children's Behavioural Problems

E. E. Ebenuwa Okoh^{1*}

¹Department of Guidance and Counselling, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria.

Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed and interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Aim: The study examined the relationship between familial dysfunctionality and school going children conduct behavior problems. The variables were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Study Design: This study is a descriptive survey. It adopted expo-facto design. It was carried out in Delta State of Nigeria. Public primary schoolchildren in Abraka metropolis formed the sample for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample size of 145 pupils. The researcher interacted with the pupils, explained the content of the research. Subsequently the pupils were guided to fill the questionnaire whenever they did not understand the items. A validated questionnaire titled "Familial dysfunctionality and conduct behavioural problems among school going children" was used to collect data. Mean, t-test, regression statistics were used to analyze the data.

Results: Findings showed that Familial dysfunctionality has significant relationship with conduct behaviour among school going children. Secondly, significant differences exist among respondents based on class level and gender. Lastly there is no significant difference based on school type.

Recommendations: The study recommended that self building packages be developed by counselors to assist victims of domestic violence.

Keywords: Familial dysfunctionality; school going children; conduct behavior problems manifestation; familial instability.

*Corresponding author: E-mail: eduebenuwaokoh@yahoo.com;

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigerian communities are infested with pockets of violence ranging from street fight through ethno-religious crisis to religious intolerance and misconduct carried out by the Islamic sect known as *Boko Haram*. Northern Nigeria is under the brutal yoke of *Boko Haram*, while in the south, oil- exploration has become hazardous, and deadly acts of kidnapping, rape and armed robbery have combined to make the life of the average Nigerian miserable [1,2]. These acts of violence have traumatized many families and their consequences are incalculable psychologically, socially, financially and otherwise [3,4,5].

The family is the bedrock of the society and the first and major socializing agent of any child. It watches over children's behaviour and builds the psychological, moral and spiritual foundation for their overall development. On the other hand, some families are avenues that create fear, low self-esteem and doubts in school age children. This is because, in such families, adults violently disagree because of differences in their outlook to life, emotional qualities, inherited characteristics and diverse reactions to varying circumstances. These family traits influence their interactions with their children. The nature and quality of family emotional interactions and relationship among members sharpen their perception and emotional, cognitive and affective reactions to life situations [6].

If disagreements and conflicts, which are part of human relationships, are not properly managed, they lead to familial dysfunctionality. Familial dysfunctionality is a multiple complex assaultive behavior that causes harm on other members of the family, particularly the children. Several studies show that about 85-90% of violence at home take place in the presence of the children; they experience abuse in about 50% of such cases [7]. [8] opined that discord between couples have harmful effects on the physical and psychological well-being of children. This marital disruption causes emotional pain and disruptions in attachment of children to parents. Marital conflict has been found to be the strongest risk factor of behavioural problems [9] Blanchard et al. [9] revealed that low levels of parental involvement, supervision and unpredictable disciplinary practices are associated with poor behavioural adjustment outcomes in children. This is because guidelines are not provided by parents, and so children behave in ways that

best suit them without considering the consequences on them or others.

[10] observed that incidence of behaviour problems is higher in homes with conflict. They found that whenever there is conflict between parents, it hurts the children. The more frequent or intense the conflict, the higher or more intense the emotional hurt, when compared with peaceful and loving families and marriages which prevent adjustment difficulties. Parental psychopathology can establish enduring deregulation in a child's physiological stress responses, which could lead to internalizing and externalizing disorders [6,11]. If these components of family turmoil are repeatedly experienced and/or witnessed by children, it creates multidimensional crisis in them. This is manifested as externalizing and internalizing behaviour patterns. Externalizing behaviours include aggressive behaviour and conduct problems exhibited by children that cause or pose as harm to other people. These behaviours include bullying or intimidating others, often initiation of physical fights and being physically cruel to others. Non-aggressive conduct behaviour problems include causing property loss or damage such as fire setting, deliberate destruction of other peoples' property, deceitfulness, lying, theft, staying out at night when it is prohibited, running away from home overnight or often being truant at school [12]. Some studies found that children's violence has a wide range of adverse psychosocial and behavioural outcomes [13]. The rate of disordered behaviour exhibited by school age children is increasing at school as a result of effects of domestic and environmental violence. This has become a source of concern to parents, counselors and other stakeholders.

It was observed by [14], after conducting a meta analysis using studies of psychosocial outcomes related to domestic violence, that there is no significant difference between boys and girls manifestation of conduct problems. Some other studies show that gender has a role to play in the manifestation of conduct problems. For example, [15,16,17] reported that the effect rate of externalizing behaviour problems is significantly higher for boys exposed to domestic violence than for girls in that same condition. Therefore, boys were considered to be at higher risk of externalizing behavioral problems in adolescence after being abused at childhood [10,18]. Literature has revealed that familial dysfunctionality affects males more than females. The diagnoses of some reports demonstrate

threefold to fourfold difference in prevalence. [19] claim that this is because it is based on diagnostic criteria which focuses on overt behaviour such as aggression and fighting which are more exhibited by males, when compared with females who are characterized by covert behaviour such as stealing or running away from home.

[20,21] in another study, found that girls exposed to family violence exhibit higher level of internalizing and externalizing behaviors than boys under the same circumstances. In addition, conduct disorder behaviour in females are linked with several negative outcomes such as antisocial personality and early pregnancies.

[22] said that sex difference in disruptive behaviour need to be more fully understood because the effects are inconclusive from varying findings. It is therefore, necessary to look at these effects in our cultural setting because there is dearth of information in this wise.

Formal school setting helps to inform, train and equip individuals with necessary skills, knowledge and competence that will enable them to cope with the challenges faced in the society on daily basis. This makes people better in nature and quality. It brings about changes in human quality in terms of physical, psychological, social, emotional and spiritual experiences [23]. School type is identified in terms of ownership. There are private and public schools. Private schools are owned by individuals or cooperate bodies while public schools are owned by the government. In standard private schools, students are closely monitored in small groups under friendly and conducive atmosphere with adequate infrastructure. These services are rendered for fees higher than those charged in public schools. Children with special needs are closely assisted in private schools. On the other hand, public schools cater for large number of students with little or no fees. The nature of this setting makes it pretty difficult for teachers to monitor the students closely and provide them the needed special help that are desired. In the school environment, as children progress in their academic journey, they acquire more skills and knowledge. These skills and knowledge help them to confront life challenges on daily basis. [24,19] found that behavioural problems were more common among children in government school (public) and among those in lower socio-

economic class. The need to ascertain the above claim by researchers has become paramount.

1.1 Statement of Problem

The increasing incidence of violence within families is a source of concern to stakeholders in family life (counselors, psychologists, family members and the government). Many family structures and processes pave way for difficulties of managing developmental processes of children. This is why many children have disordered behaviours. Hence, it is necessary, to examine the relationship between familial dysfunctionality and conduct behaviors among primary school children.

This study is guided by the following research questions.

- Is there relationship between familial dysfunctionality and conduct behaviour problems among school going children?
- Is there gender difference in the manifestation of conduct behaviour problems among school going children based on gender?
- Is there difference in the manifestation of conduct behavior problems among school going children based on class level?
- Is there difference in the manifestation of conduct behavior problems among school going children based on school type?

1.2 Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between familial dysfunctionality and conduct behaviour problems among school going children
2. There is no significant difference in the manifestation of conduct behaviour problems among primary school going children based on gender.
3. There is no significance difference in the manifestation of conduct behaviour problems among school going children based on school type
4. There is no significance difference in the manifestation of conduct behaviour problems among school going children based on class level.

2. METHODS

The design of this study is survey. The target population is all primary school pupils in public

schools between the ages of five (5) years and eight (8). The researcher interacted with the respondents and explained items in the instrument. They responded based on personal experience. The sampling was purposive because the pupils were guided on how to respond to the instrument which is questionnaire.

2.1 Instrument

The research instrument used for this study is a self developed questionnaire and was titled "Relationship between Familial dysfunctionality and conduct behaviour problems among school going children". It was made up of two parts. Part one sought relevant demographic information on gender, age and class. The second part consisted of 20 items made up of items on familial dysfunctionality and conduct behavior problems. Familial dysfunctionality measured items that included abuses, use of degrading words, physical abuse, child-parent interaction, tension created in the family as a result of disagreement and parents not being able to provide essential materials.

Conduct behavior problems measured items that included stored up anger against people, disobedience to authority, hostility to peers, mistrust, lies to cover misdeeds, disobedience to adult orders, bullying, feeling of insecurity, and stealing. The instrument was designed such that respondents could respond to items on a 4 point format of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). It measured conduct behaviour problems and familial dysfunctionality. The face and content validity of the instrument was established through expert judgment. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's reliability procedure which yielded an index of conduct problems $r=0.50$ and familial dysfunctionality $r=0.60$. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. The hypotheses were tested and analyzed using regression, ANOVA and t-test statistics at 95% level of confidence or 0.05 level of significance.

3. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Question 1: Is there relationship between familial dysfunctionality and conduct behaviour problems among school going children?

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between familial dysfunctionality and conduct behavior among school going children.

Table 1 shows that there is significant relationship between familial dysfunctionality ($M=14.67$, $SD=3.25$) and behavioural problems ($M=15.50$, $SD=3.82$) as indicated by the $r=0.482$. Also indicating a statistical significance is the regression model as indicated by $F(1, 143) = 43.24$ at $P=0.00$. The null hypothesis is, therefore, rejected. There is a significant relationship between familial dysfunctionality and conduct behavioural problems of primary school pupils. The adjusted r^2 value of 0.227 shows that 22.7% of conduct behavioural problems among primary school pupils was due to familial malfunction.

Research question 2: Is there difference in the manifestation of conduct behaviour problems among school going children based on gender?

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the manifestation of conduct behaviour problems among school going children based on gender.

Table 2 shows that $t(143) = -1.50$, $p=0.007$, was found to be significant. The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the manifestation of conduct behaviour problems among school going children based on gender is, therefore, rejected. This implies that female pupils ($N=67$; $\bar{X}=16.01$; $SD=4.42$) manifest more of conduct behavioural problems than their male ($N=78$, $\bar{X}=15.06$; $SD=3.19$) counterparts with a mean difference of 0.95. Furthermore, this result shows that familial dysfunctionality actually affects pupils who have experienced it overtime irrespective of gender, but female pupils, according to our result, are more prone to manifestation of behavioural problems than male pupils.

Research question 3: Is there difference in the manifestation of conduct behaviour problems among school going children based on class level?

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in manifestation of conduct behaviour problems among school going children based on class level.

Table 3 shows that all the respondents, irrespective of class level, that experience familial dysfunctionality manifest conduct behavior problems. Those who are below primary five

have $\bar{X} = 14.85$, SD 2.81, primary five have $\bar{X} = 17.13$ and SD = 3.80 while primary six have $\bar{X} = 15.78$ SD = 3.82. The inferential statistics shows that there is significant difference in the manifestation of conduct behaviour problems based on class level. The F value is 4.86 and significant at 0.05 level with pupils in primary five pupils having the highest mean value. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

Research question 4: Is there difference in the manifestation of conduct behavior problems among school going children based on school type?

Hypothesis 4: There is no significance difference in the manifestation of conduct behavior problems among school going children based on school type.

The table above shows that the computed t-value of 1.413 is not significant at 0.134. Therefore, the null hypothesis which says that there is no

significant difference in manifestation of conduct behaviour problems by pupils based on school type is accepted. Furthermore, as shown in table 4, pupils in public schools have N = 96 with m = 15.82 and SD= 3.89, while private school pupils have N = 49 with X = 14.87 and SD = 3.44. The mean difference is 0.95. It shows that there is no significant difference in manifestation of conduct behavior problems by pupils based on school type, though, the children in public schools' manifestation of conduct behavior problems is slightly higher than those in private schools by 0.95.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study showed that respondents, irrespective of age, gender, class level and school type experience familial instability in varying degrees. The experiences make them to display varying degrees of conduct behaviour problems. The probable reason for this finding is that whenever any person consistently witnesses or experiences violence, he/she

Table 1. Mean, Standard deviation and regression analysis on the relationship between familial dysfunctionality and conduct behavioural problems of pupils

Variable estimate	N	Mean	SD	r	r ²	Adjusted r ²	Standard error
Conduct behaviour	145	15.50	3.82	0.482	0.232	0.227	3.36
Familial dysfunctionality	145	14.67	3.25				
ANOVA							
	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F	Sig		
Regression	488.506	1	488.506	43.24	0.000		
Residual	1615.742	143	11.299				
Total	2104.248	144					
Coefficients							
	Unstandardised co-efficient		Standardized co-efficient				
	B	Std error	Beta	t	sig		
Constant	7.18	1.30		5.54	0.00		
Familial Dysfunctionality	0.567	0.086	0.482	6.58	0.00		

Significant at 0.05 level

Table 2. Independent sample T-test for manifestation of conduct behavior problems based on gender

Variable	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	T	MD	SIG	Decision
Male	78	15.06	3.19	143	-1.50	-0.95	0.007	Rejected
Female	67	16.01	4.42					

Table 3. Mean, standard deviation (descriptive) and ANOVA statistics on the difference in the manifestation of conduct behaviour problems based on class level

Descriptive statistics				ANOVA					Decision	
Variables (class level)	N	\bar{X}	SD	Variables	Sum of square	DF	Mean square	F	Sig	
Below Primary Five	43	14.85	2.81	Between Group	197.30	3	65.77	4.86	0.003	Rejected
Primary 5	22	17.13	3.80	Within group	1906.96	141	13.52			
Primary 6	80	15.78	3.82	Total		144				

Table 4. T-test showing manifestation of conduct behaviour problems based on school type

School type	N	X	SD	DF	MD	t	Sign	Decision
Public	96	15.82	3.89	143	0.95	1.413	.134	Accepted
Private	49	14.87	3.44					

begins to internalize the experiences which, in turn, change the person's outlook on the world and expression of emotions. This finding agrees with [10] whose study revealed that whenever there is conflict between parents, it hurts their children. The higher the occurrences, the deeper the emotional hurt. These children are drained of positive emotions, which could lead to emotional bankruptcy which manifest in form of externalizing or internalizing conduct behaviour problems.

The study found, based on the responses of both male and female pupils that experience of family turmoil has impact more on the behaviour and expression of emotions females than males. This finding agrees with [17,16,22] who reported that girls who are exposed to domestic violence manifest varying degrees of externalized and internalized behavior than boys. This shows that abuse of females who are emotional affect their conception about their being (self-identity and interpersonal relationship) than boys who may only revolt through aggression.

It was found that there is no significant difference in the manifestation of conduct behaviour of victims based on school type. However, pupils of private schools slightly lower manifest behaviour problems than those of public schools. This slight difference could be due to difference in school environment. In most private schools, education is mainly child centred and any child manifesting adverse behavioural problems is treated with positive physical, emotional and social environment counseling skills. When the skills are used to work on the child, desired adjustment is achieved, unlike in public schools where there

is no close monitoring of children to identify those that have adjustment problems. This agrees with [24] whose findings showed that pupils that attend public schools exhibit higher behaviour problems.

Finally, it was found that there is significant difference based on class level. This finding agrees with [25] which opined that age related difference might result from children in higher class who have acquired more knowledge and developed more appropriate coping behavioral skills to confront violence and select various strategies to alleviate upsetting symptoms, unlike children in lower classes that have not been able to identify and differentiate familial dysfunctionality from normal lifestyle.

5. CONCLUSION

There is prevalence of familial dysfunctionality in our society. Its impact on children through exposure or experience is negative. Its effects cut across a range of their cognitive functioning. Family ferocity is a multi-hydra monster that drains the positive energy of its victims, leaving them with multi problems manifesting in form of impaired and distorted means of processing information, they also engage irrational actions and reactions towards event. Thus leading to exhibition of disordered behaviors.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- (1) Counsellors should develop programmes where traumatized members are assisted through value reorientation.

- (2) Programmers on life skills and self packaging should be put in place to assist children who are victims of family malfunction.
- (3) Workshops on self-building packages developed by counselors should be used to assist victims of domestic violence (it leads to self esteem and self confidence)
- (4) Victims should be taught how to share their experiences with others.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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