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VIOLENCE AND CRIME IN THE FAMILY: PATTERNS, CAUSES, AND CONSEQUENCES

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PARENTAL INFLUENCE AND DATING VIOLENCE AMONG STUDENTS AT NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – Dating violence has, in recent times, been a social problem that has been creating different levels of concern especially among parents, and those in the academia, in Nigeria. Studies have shown causes to be largely due to personality types, but little relate it with violence between the parents of the perpetrator. This study examines the influence of violence between parents and the effect on dating violence among students in Nigerian Universities.

Design/Methodology/Approach – Questionnaires were administered to 460 students who had experienced violence in their dating relationship. The study had 55.7% of the respondents being females.

Findings – All of the respondents had experienced dating violence at one point or the other in their relationship. About 36.7% of the

respondents reported to having been in dating relationship with a partner who had witnessed violence in the home. Data analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient indicate that the variables of parental conflict and dating violence were significantly positively correlated among the students.

Originality/Value — The study was limited because it focuses on only one university, and research in the area of dating violence in Nigeria has not been extensively reported. The study therefore emphasizes the impact of socialization process on dating behavior of young adults in Nigeria as well as the need to have further studies on these dating patterns. This study will serve as addition to the gradually increasing literature on dating behavior of young adults in the Nigerian society.

Keywords: Dating violence; Nigerian Universities; violent behavior; parental conflict; intimacy

INTRODUCTION

Dating violence has been conceptualized as involving range of incidents from physical force, emotional, and verbal abuse to murder (Hickman, Jaycox, & Aronoff, 2004). It can also be defined as a form of relationship which involves insult or assault.

According to Iconis (2013), dating violence is a significant problem on college campuses. Studies have shown the prevalence of this incident. For instance, Ajuwon, Funmilayo, and Osungbade (2011) found that students in Nigerian Universities are both victims and perpetrators of violent behaviors in dating. Boladale et al. (2004) reported that about a third of students in Nigerian Universities have experienced dating violence. Lewis and Fremouw (2001) reported that as many as one in three college couples will be involved in at least one incident of violence during their dating relationship.

In Nigeria, as in many other African countries, beating of wives and children is widely sanctioned as a form of discipline (UNICEF, 2001). By this act, parents believe they are instilling discipline in their children, husbands on their wives. This kind of violence functions therefore as a means of enforcing conformity with the role of a woman. Violent punishments such as corporal punishment have been found to lead to delinquency in

adolescents and later to violent behaviors or crimes. Violence in adolescence may make the adolescent angry and confused and may direct the anger toward the parents or other children. This could account for such behaviors as violent behaviors toward dating partners in the university. While some injuries may not be physical, they could be emotional. Victims often have low self-esteem, deep feelings of anger and stress, which could lead to depression. An abused child may go into relationships with an aggressive mode (CDC, 2006).

Dating violence is a common occurrence and while it exists with either males or females being victims, violence in dating relationship is mutual, though the nature of violence can be different. Molidor, Tolman, and Kober (2000) found that girls were most likely to have severe forms such as being punched or forced to engage in sexual activities; boys were more likely to be pinched, slapped, or scratched. Dating violence may be part of a continuum of violence beginning in dating relationships and continuing through marriage (Boladale, Adesanmi, & Olutayo, 2013).

The theory of intergenerational transmission of violence is one of the theories that attempts to explain contributing factors to dating violence. Based on Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, the intergenerational transmission hypothesis posits that because violence is a learned behavior, exposure to violence in the family of origin may lead to violence in later intimate relationships.

Studies that have assessed family interactions more generally have found that family conflicts and negative interactions in the family predict dating violence perpetration and victimization (Andrews, Foster, Capaldi, & Hops, 2000; Linder & Collins, 2005). Also, poorly managed parental conflicts place adolescents at the risk of experiencing dating violence in their own intimate relationships. For instance, parents tend to be restrictive on their views of what is age-appropriate behavior, while adolescents tend to be more accepting than adults of actions that violate inter-personal and social expectations of age-appropriate behavior. Also, parents are more experienced, while adolescents, generally, are adventurous and learn faster from the wealth of parents' experience, and sometimes without the parents knowing it.

Furthermore, the frequency of inter-parental conflicts and the negative behavior during such conflicts as well as the conflict-resolution strategies employed by parents usually affect and influence the adolescents' ideal picture of a romantic or dating relationship. In addition, inter-parental violence might influence adolescents' own conflict management skills. These dimensions of parental conflict have deleterious effects on the adjustment

and behavior of children and adolescents (Cummings & Davies, 2002; Grych & Fincham, 1990; Zimet & Jacob, 2001).

For instance, more frequent conflict between parents is related to higher levels of emotional distress and behavioral problems among children and adolescents (Kerig, 1996; Tschann et al., 2002). Negative parental behaviors during conflicts, such as anger and withdrawal, are related to children's externalizing behavior problems (Katz & Gottman, 1993). In addition, poor conflict resolution is related to emotional distress among both children and adolescents (Cummings, Ballard, El-Sheik, & Lake, 1991; Tschann et al., 2002); while adolescent who have poor management skills may be at an increased risk of disagreements with date partners escalating into violence which in turn affects their relational temperament, in all.

A study in Nigeria by Izugbara, Emmanuel, and Peter (2008) brought to light few studies on dating violence in Nigeria. They found that women's views regarding their abuse reinforced the cultural belief that men are naturally violent and that women are sometimes to be blamed. Other studies (Mapayi et al., 2011; Odujirin, 1993) on spousal violence in Nigeria showed that with the theory of intergenerational transmission of violence in play, the courtship or dating violence becomes an important matter of concern in Nigeria. Exposure to violence during childhood is also one of the most commonly studied correlates of dating violence. Dating violence could be linked to the perpetuation of spousal violence which also creates an environment for continued dating violence as children experience and witness violence at home and thus exposing the children to tendency to develop violence in their future relationships (Boladale et al., 2013).

Dating violence is a growing concern in Nigeria (Boladale et al., 2013) and appears to be directly related to witnessing of spousal violence which in turn creates a conducive environment for continued dating violence as children experience and witness violence in the home. This thus enables them to develop the propensity to exhibit violence in their own future relationships.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to determine the prevalence of and present coherent dimensions of dating violence among students of University of Ilorin, Nigeria. Specific objectives include:

1. To examine the prevalence violence among parents of the students of University of Ilorin.
2. To highlight the prevalence of dating violence among students of University of Ilorin.
3. To determine the relationship between violence witnessed at home and dating violence.

Justification of the Study

Strong parent-child relationships as well as positive parental modeling are necessary for proper development of the child. The study therefore is intended to broaden knowledge in understanding the effects of developing intimate and cordial relationships between parents and with their children. A study of this sort can help to provide objective information that can help parents on how to effectively bring up their children, counselors, and teachers to make more positive and effective impacts on the adolescents and to help guide them in making responsible decisions. It is also intended to enable counselors, sociologists, parents, and teachers to know the significance of effective parenting, keeping conflicts, particularly involving violence away from the home and the impacts on the adolescents' behavior. Research into dating violence in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on parental violent conflicts, is limited. This study intends to fill the gaps created by earlier studies by emphasizing the functions of parental cordial relationships as well as their influence on the development process of the child.

METHOD

Research Design

The descriptive survey method was chosen and used for this research. The descriptive survey establishes the incidence, the distribution, and interpretations among sociological and psychological variables in a population. Furthermore, it focuses on people and their beliefs, opinions, perceptions, motivations, and behaviors. The total population included students of the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

PARTICIPANTS

A total of 600 respondents in the third year of their programs in the University of Ilorin were randomly selected to participate in this study, out of which 460 had experienced some form of violence in their dating relationship. Questionnaires were distributed and correctly filled out. Interviews were also conducted on a total of 79 respondents. For the purpose of interpreting all gathered data logically, frequency count and simple percentage were used and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to analyze the data.

RESULTS

A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed out of which 460 had experienced or witnessed violence in their home while growing up and 460 were used in this study. From the total of 460 that had witnessed violence in the home while growing up, a total of 256 of the respondents were females (55.7%), while 235 (44.3%) were males (Table 1).

Also from the study, respondents were measured by their perception of the major factor causing the violence in the relationship they were into. A total of 124 (36.7%) of respondent believed that the partner, having witnessed violence in the home, most likely was conditioned into believing that violence was the normal reaction to conflicts in relationships. Another 117 (27.8%) of the respondents were of the opinion that jealousy was the predominant factor influencing violence by their partners, while 106 (13.9%) of respondents confirmed that uncontrollable anger was the cause of dating violence and 113 (21.5%) were of the view that the predominant cause was their denying the partner of sexual intercourse (Table 2).

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Gender.

Gender	Frequent	Percentage (%)
Male	235	44.3
Female	256	55.7
Total	460	100.0

Participants also gave information on who they shared their experience of dating violence with. Majority of the respondents claimed they discussed with their friends more about their dating violence (49.4%), while 24.1% kept it to themselves. Another 16.5% shared it with their parents; some 6.3% with lecturers on campus and 3.8% had discussions with professional counselors whenever such incidences occurred (Table 3).

Hypothesis for this study states that there is no significant relationship between parental violence and dating violence of male students in intimate relationships in the University of Ilorin. This was tested using the Pearson correlation coefficient presented in Table 4. The table presents data on the relationship between parental conflicts of students in intimate relationships and dating violence. The results from the table indicate that the variables of parental conflict and dating violence were significantly positively correlated among the students. This is because the calculated r -value of 0.90 is greater than the critical r -value. This invariably implies that violence between parents influences dating violence tendencies of students in intimate relationships in University of Ilorin.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents by Perceived Predominant Cause of Dating Violence.

Option	Frequent	Percentage (%)
Partner's witness of violence in the home	124	27
Jealousy	117	25
Uncontrollable anger	106	23
Denial of sexual intercourse	113	25
Total	460	100.0

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents by Who They Share Their Dating Violence Experience with.

Opinion	Frequent	Percentage (%)
Parents	76	16.5
Friends	226	49.4
Lecturers	28	6.3
Keep silence	110	24.1
A professional counselor	17	3.8
Total	460	100.0

Table 4. Correlation Coefficient of Parental Violence and Dating Violence of Male Students in Intimate Relationships.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	Calculated <i>r</i> -Value	Critical <i>r</i> -Value
Parental conflict	235	53.76	5.62	233	0.90*	0.14
Dating violence	235	63.86	8.06			

* Significant $p < 0.05$.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the hypothesis for this study showed that there is a significant relationship between parental violence and dating violence of male students in intimate relationships in University of Ilorin. This goes in-line with the studies of Mapayi et al. (2011), and Odujirin (1993) on spousal violence in Nigeria which showed that with the theory of intergenerational transmission of violence in play, courtship or dating violence becomes an important matter of concern in Nigeria. Exposure to violence during childhood is also one of the most commonly studied correlates of dating violence. Boladale et al. (2013) also found that dating violence could be linked to the perpetuation of spousal violence which also creates an environment for continued dating violence as children experience and witness violence at home and thus exposing the children to tendency to develop violence in their future relationships. In their own study, Kinsfogel and Grych (2004) found that parental conflicts, reflecting a combination of verbal and physical aggression, have been found to be related to dating aggression among young men.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. It was conducted in only one University in Nigeria, out of over 50 universities in the country.
2. The sample was limited to only 460 participants out of over 20,000 students in total population.
3. The study attempted to measure variables based only from the personal experiences of the respondents, and not involving the parents.
4. As the measures were all self-reported, there were bound to be elements of bias in the responses.

5. The study was restricted to measuring only the variable of parental conflict, and leaving aside other possible contributing factors.

However, it is expected that a study of this sort will provoke further research studies of this nature using the similar or other approaches in the fields of dating violence, adolescents and the family.

CONCLUSION

From all investigation with regard to this study, dating violence is rather a pertinent issue. Particularly with 460 out of 600 respondents randomly selected having experienced violence from their dating partners who themselves have witnessed some sort of violence in their homes. A study of this sort also brings to the limelight the necessity to create opportunities for victims of dating violence to have places of refuge or solitude and proper counseling sessions. Also, parents' relationship thus has impact on the manner their wards conduct their own relationship, whether it is little or much influence. Moreover, it is interesting to know that adolescence appeared to confide more in friends, themselves, than they do their parents. Given the prevalence of violent behavior, particularly, dating among university students, the study offers a number of recommendations. The school authority should create special centers/shelters or hotlines where student's can report incidence of violence, particularly, relational violence. In addition, parents ought to create an ambience of positive learning, as they are models to their wards, to do otherwise could be inimical as adolescence can become "so fitted by been fit in an unfit fitness," which will tell on their worldview, particularly, on relational issues.

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