



Family Size And Educational Level Of Parent As Correlates Of Child Abuse Among Teenagers In Mbo Local Government Area

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Abstract

The study assessed the family size and educational level of parent in relationship to child abuse among teenagers in Mbo Local Government Area. In carrying out the study, a survey research design was adopted for this study. The study was carried out in Mbo Local Government Area. The targeted population for the study comprised all teenagers in Mbo local government area of Akwa Ibom State. A simple random sampling technique was used to select a total of 220 teenagers for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Social Variables and Child Abuse Questionnaire (SVCAQ)". Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out by an expert in test, measurement, and evaluation in order to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, and completeness for the study under consideration. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.83, and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics meant to answer the research questions and simple regression analysis meant to test the hypothesis. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels. Based on the findings of the work it can be concluded that the educational status of the parent, family size, and income level of the parent have significant effect on child abuse among teenagers in Mbo Local Government Area. This in turn contributes immensely to engagement in robbery, and rapes. One of the recommendations made was that government at all level should encourage on family planning in order to help control rate of child bearing to a bearable size to avert child labour.

Keywords: Family Size, Educational Level, Parent, Correlates, Child Abuse, Teenagers and Mbo Local Government Area.

Introduction

Child abuse covers any behaviour that is seen as intentional, unintentional or well-intentioned, that results in physical or emotional harm to children. It appears to occur in all income brackets, racial, religious and ethnic groups. Cultures everywhere have different ways of looking at



child abuse. In the South eastern part of Nigeria, the problem of child abuse could be of great interest for some reasons. The largely illiterate population in sub Saharan Africa may not know about the need to limit number of children being produced. This may therefore increase army of youths that fill our streets that are out of school. It may be proper to find out if the present researcher can confirm this with empirical data.

The abuse of children dates back to early times. It was about 1978 that there was an increased worldwide awareness of the various denials of the rights of the child. It is a common sight in Nigeria, to see children far below the age of twelve hawking things like groundnuts, eggs, plantain chips, in disagreeable weather. They usually look gaunt, pale in countenance, unhealthy and malnourished. Most of these children are deprived of school and this deprivation is one of the worst forms of child abuse. Where children are many from a family, it is unlikely that they will all benefit from schooling. In our society, some children are compelled to go and live with extended family relations because of having too many mouths to feeds. These unfortunates experience deprivation, frustration and may lack opportunity to go to school (Spataro 2002). Furthermore, Hopper (2005) studied the relationship between child abuse and multiple types of childhood dysfunctions. It was concluded that child abuse is strongly associated with large family size. Large family size can also increase the risk for abuse as shown by Ojo (2003), Dubowitz and Black, (2001). They further claimed that unstable family environments in which composition of the household frequently changes, where family members move in and out, are a few particularly noted cases of chronic neglect. The aim of the present research is to determine if family size actually relates to child abuse.

Statement of Problem

The 2007 assessment of child abuse among teenagers at the basic Education Level in Nigeria revealed the abuse outside the home and in the school in particular was a major concern (Society for Family Health, 2012). In all these, the Akwa Ibom state government has implemented the free and compulsory education in the state, but children are still being found on the streets, hawking, laboring stigmatization as witches and in some cases houses with large family size sent their children out as house mates to make money for their parent at the end of the month. This problem prompts this study as the researchers aims at find out if family size and educational level of parent have any correlation with the incidence of child abuse in Mbo Local Government Area.

Objectives

1. To examine the influence of family size on child abuse among teenagers in Mbo LGA.
2. To examine the influence of educational level of the parent on child abuse among teenagers in Mbo LGA

Research Question

1. How does family size influence child abuse among teenagers in Mbo LGA?
2. How does educational level of parent influence child among teenagers in Mbo LGA?

Hypothesis

1. Family size does not have significant influence on child abuse among teenagers in Mbo LGA.
2. Educational level of parents does not have significant influence on child abuse among teenagers in Mbo LGA.

Conceptual Reviews



Concept of family size

The concept of family size, is shaped by sociological, economic, demographic, and health considerations. Scholars like McLanahan (2004) explore the sociological impact of changing family structures, emphasizing the consequences for children in diverse family sizes. Economic perspectives, as articulated by Becker and Lewis (2014), delve into the intricate relationship between income considerations and decisions about family size. Bongaarts and Casterline (2013) contribute insights into demographic trends, particularly the fertility transition, with a focus on regional variations, such as those in Sub-Saharan Africa.

While the term family size is sometimes used to represent the total number of individuals comprising a family unit, Treas (1981) argues convincingly for decomposing the concept into two components: numbers of children and numbers of adults in the household. This distinction is important, as observed patterns of change in overall family size may be attributable to one component or the other, as may effects of overall family size. In the present discussion, family size is defined in terms of the number of children in the household. A further distinction is made between family size in the parental and filial households, sometimes referred to as the family of origin (or orientation) and the family of procreation. Some use the term sibship size to refer to the number of children in an individual's parental family (Blake 1989; Ryder 1986). However, the two are not directly comparable: Mean family size takes into account those families which have no children, while mean sibship size is necessarily restricted to families with children.

Concept of Education

Education encompasses the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes. It plays a pivotal role in personal development, societal progress, and economic prosperity. Education is not merely a process of imparting information but an interactive and experiential means of fostering critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. UNESCO's definition further underscores education's broader goals, emphasizing its role in promoting sustainable development, cultural diversity, and global citizenship (UNESCO, 2015).

The significance of education is evident in its impact on individual empowerment and social cohesion. Education has transformative potential, serving as a tool for emancipation and social change. Moreover, the World Bank acknowledges the pivotal role of education in breaking the cycle of poverty and fostering economic development (World Bank, 2018). Contemporary discussions on education extend beyond traditional academic settings, encompassing lifelong learning, digital literacy, and adaptability in the face of evolving global challenges. Education is a dynamic and transformative process crucial for personal development and societal progress. The works of Dewey, Freire, and the insights from UNESCO and the World Bank collectively emphasize education's multifaceted nature and its role in shaping individuals and societies. Understanding education's diverse dimensions is essential for fostering inclusive, equitable, and sustainable educational systems worldwide.

Concept of Child Abuse

Child abuse is defined as a non-accidental behavior by parents, caregiver, or any other adult that is outside the norms of conduct and can cause physical or emotional harm to a child or a young person (Boomfield, 2005). There are five main types of child abuse: the physical abuse, emotional maltreatment, neglect, sexual abuse and witnessing of family violence.

1) Physical abuse: is identified as a non-accidental use of physical force that can cause harm to a child. This includes shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, strangling and poisoning (Boomfield, 2005). It doesn't matter whether an adult had an intend to cause a child harm or not, if an action lead to harm or not, if an action lead to harm, it is regarded as abusive anyway. Physical abuse can also depend on the age of a child and the nature of the behavior.

2) Emotional abuse: is defined as an inappropriate verbal or symbolic act towards a child that can lead to child's problems on a psychological level e.g. belittling, yelling or demoing.

3) Neglect: it means that either parents or caregivers do not provide children with enough care as it is expected compared with the norms of society. It consequently can affect child's physical and psychological development.

Causes of Child Abuse

Most parents want to love and care for their child in a safe home but most times stress, tiredness. Lack of parenting skill or family support make the pressure of caring for a child overwhelming and can cause abuse. The causes of child abuse among teenagers are:

1) Isolation and lack of support of family member, friends, partners or community support to help with the demands of parenting.

2) Past childhood experience – parents may have experienced abuse as a child in their own families, which could have caused them to develop an insecure attachment style.

3) Low self-confidence: parents may doubt their ability to meet their child's needs and find it hard asking for help.

4) Drug, alcohol or gambling problem – addiction or substance abuse may affect a parent's ability to meet their child needs.

5) Lack of parenting skills – parents may not know how to care for their child or may believe it is acceptable to sue excessive physical force to discipline or punish a child.

6) Unrealistic expectations – A lack of understanding about a child's developmental stages and behavior.

7) Stress – Financial pressures, job worries, medical problem or caring for a family with a large number or disability.

8) Divorces of the parent - Any child trained by a single parent, there is always problem of child upbringing and that child can never be like one that is brought up by both parents in the same home.

The influence of family size on child abuse among teenagers

The influence of family size on child abuse is a complex and multifaceted topic that has been explored by researchers seeking to understand the dynamics within households. Larger families, often characterized by a greater number of children, may face challenges related to resource allocation. Parents in such families may find it difficult to distribute time and attention equally among their children, potentially leading to increased stress levels and strained parent-child relationships. This strain can create an environment where the risk of child abuse becomes elevated.

Socioeconomic factors are closely intertwined with family size and can impact the likelihood of child abuse. Families with more children may experience financial constraints that contribute to stress and difficulty meeting the diverse needs of each child. Research by Berger and Waldfogel (2011) suggests that lower socioeconomic status is associated with an increased risk of child maltreatment, emphasizing the role of economic factors in shaping parenting behaviors.



Birth order within a family can also be a significant factor in the influence of family size on child abuse. Younger siblings in larger families may receive less supervision and attention from parents, potentially increasing their vulnerability to abusive situations. Additionally, cultural and social norms regarding parenting practices can vary, influencing disciplinary approaches within larger families (Lee & Bellamy 2012).

While the link between family size and child abuse is acknowledged, it is crucial to recognize that various factors contribute to abusive behaviors. Parental mental health, community support, and overall family dynamics all play essential roles. Efforts to prevent child abuse should address these complex interactions, focusing on providing support to families, promoting positive parenting practices, and addressing the underlying stressors that contribute to abusive situations. Understanding the nuanced relationship between family size and child abuse is essential for the development of effective intervention and prevention strategies.

The influence of educational level of the parent on child abuse

The educational level of parents has been identified as a significant factor influencing the occurrence of child abuse. Numerous studies have explored the association between parental education and the likelihood of abusive behaviors. Research consistently suggests an inverse relationship between parental education and the risk of child abuse. Parents with lower levels of education may face increased stressors and challenges in coping with parenting responsibilities, potentially leading to a higher incidence of abusive behaviors.

A comprehensive meta-analysis by Sedlak et al. (2010) found that lower parental education was associated with a greater likelihood of child maltreatment. The study highlighted the importance of considering socioeconomic factors, including education, when assessing the risk of child abuse. Parents with limited educational attainment may have fewer resources, both economic and informational, to cope with the demands of parenthood, contributing to an elevated risk of abuse or neglect.

The impact of parental education on child abuse is multifaceted. Higher educational attainment is often associated with better parenting knowledge, problem-solving skills, and access to support networks. Additionally, parents with higher education levels may have increased economic stability, reducing the stressors that can contribute to abusive behaviors. Understanding the link between parental education and child abuse is crucial for developing targeted interventions and support systems that address the unique challenges faced by families with varying educational backgrounds (Sedlak et al. 2010).

Theoretical Framework

Attachment Theory

Attachment theorists believe human development behavior as a result of how their caregiver nurtures them. According to attachment theory the type of bond that develops between child and caregiver affects the child's later relationship, there are 4 bonding types.

- 1) **Secure:** The securely attached child freely explores his/her surroundings and is easily comforted.
- 2) **Preoccupied:** Children with preoccupied attachments will move easily between their caregiver and a stranger when looking for comfort but will simultaneously resist the comfort given.

3) **Dismissive:** Children who experience dismissive attachments show distrust of the caregiver and have an inability to be comforted.

Fearful: This attachment pattern is characterized by erratic and confused behavior if the child is unable to recognize which behavior gain favorable attention from the caregiver or parent. The reliance of the theory to the research is that it will help parent to be watchful of the activities of their children, the kind of relationship that is kept, the kind of book and movies they watch and read, their languages and meaning of their words.

In carrying out the study, survey research design was adopted for this study. The study was carried out in Mbo Local Government Area. The targeted population for the study comprised all teenagers in Mbo local government area of Akwa Ibom State. A simple random sampling technique was used to select a total of 220 teenagers for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Social Variables and Child Abuse Questionnaire (SVCAQ)”. Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out by an expert in test, measurement, and evaluation in order to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, and completeness for the study under consideration. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.83, and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics meant to answer the research questions and simple regression analysis meant to test the hypothesis. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels.

Data Analyses And Result

Research Question One

The research question sought to find out how family size influence child abuse among teenagers. In order to answer the research question, descriptive analysis was performed on the data collected as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of the influence of family size on child abuse among teenagers

Variable	N	Arithmetic mean	Expected mean	R	Remarks
Child Abuse	220	13.43	12.5	0.97*	*Strong to perfect relationship
Family Size		14.78	12.5		

Source: Field Survey

Table 1 presents the result of the descriptive statistics of the influence of family size on child abuse among teenagers. The two variables were observed to have strong to perfect relationship at 97%. The arithmetic mean for child abuse (13.43) was observed to be greater than the expected mean score of (12.5). In addition to that, the arithmetic mean as regards family size 14.78 was observed to be higher

than the expected mean score of 12.5. The result therefore means that there is significant influence of family size on child abuse among teenagers.

Research Question Two

The research question sought to find out how educational level of parent influence child abuse among teenagers. In order to answer the research question, descriptive analysis was performed on the data collected as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive analysis of the influence of educational level of parents on child abuse among teenagers

Variable	N	Arithmetic mean	Expected mean	R	Remarks
Child Abuse		13.43	12.5		
	220			0.82*	*Strong to perfect relationship
Educational level of parents		16.13	12.5		

Source: Field Survey

Table 2. presents the result of the descriptive statistics of the influence of educational level of parents on child abuse among teenagers. The two variables were observed to have strong to perfect relationship at 82%. The arithmetic mean for child abuse (13.43) was observed to be greater than the expected mean score of 12.5. In addition to that, the arithmetic mean as regards educational level of parents (16.13) was observed to be higher than the expected mean score of 12.5. The result therefore means that there is significant influence of educational level of parents on child abuse among teenagers.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant influence of family size on child abuse among teenagers. In order to test the hypothesis, two variables were identified as follows:

1. Family size as the independent variable
2. Child abuse among teenagers as the dependent variable

Regression analysis was used to analyse the data in order to determine the influence on each variable (see table 3).

Table 3: Regression analysis of the influence of family size on child abuse among teenagers

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	0.97 ^a	0.94	0.94	0.52	0.94

***Significant at 0.05 level; df =218; N =220; critical r-value = 0.139**

The above table shows that the calculated R-value 0.97 was greater than the critical R-value of 0.139 at 0.5 alpha levels with 218 degree of freedom. The R-square value of 0.94 predicts 94% of the influence of family size on child abuse among teenagers. This rate of percentage is highly positive and therefore means that there is significant influence of family size on child abuse among teenagers.

It was also deemed necessary to find out the extent of the variance of each class of independent variable as responded by each respondent (see table 4).

Table 4: Analysis of variance of the difference in the influence of family size on child abuse among teenagers.

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	972.34	1	972.34	3554.40	.000 ^b
Residual	59.64	218	.274		
Total	1031.98	219			

- Predictors: (Constant), family size
- Dependent Variable: Child abuse among teenagers.

The above table presents the calculated F-value as (3554.40) and the critical f-value as (000). Being that the critical f-value (000^b) is below the probability level of 0.05, the result therefore means that there is significant difference in the influence exerted by the independent variables (family size) on the dependent variable which is child abuse among teenagers.

Hypothesis Two

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant influence of educational level of parent on child abuse among teenagers. In order to test the hypothesis, two variables were identified as follows: -

- Educational level of parents as the independent variable
- Child abuse among teenagers as the dependent variable

Regression analysis was used to analyse the data in order to determine the influence on each variable (see table 5).

TABLE 5: Regression analysis of the influence of educational level of parent on child abuse among teenagers

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	0.82 ^a	0.68	0.68	1.24	0.68

***Significant at 0.05 level; df =220; N =218; critical r-value = 0.139**

The above table shows that the calculated R-value 0.82 was greater than the critical R-value of 0.139 at 0.5 alpha levels with 218 degree of freedom. The R-square value of 0.68 predicts 68% of the influence of educational level of parent on child abuse among teenagers. This rate of percentage is highly positive and therefore means that there is significant influence of educational level of parent on child abuse among teenagers.

It was also deemed necessary to find out the extent of the variance of each class of independent variable as responded by each respondent (see table 6).

TABLE 6: Analysis of variance of the difference in the influence of educational level of parent on child abuse among teenagers

1. Model	2. Sum of Squares	3. Df	4. Mean Square	5. F	6. Sig.
7. Regression	8. 698.50	9. 1	10. 698.50	11. 456.62	12. .000 ^b
13. Residual	14. 333.48	15. 218	16. 1.530	17.	18.
19. Total	20. 1031.98	21. 219	22.	23.	24.

- a. Predictors: (Constant), educational level of parent.
b. Dependent Variable: child abuse among teenagers.

The above table presents the calculated F-value as (456.62) and the critical f-value as (000). Being that the critical f-value (000a) is below the probability level of 0.05, the result therefore means that there is significant difference in the influence exerted by the independent variables (educational level of parent) on the dependent variable which is child abuse among teenagers.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the work it can be concluded that the educational status of the parent, family size, and income level of the parent have significant effect on child abuse among teenagers in Mbo Local Government Area. This in turn contributes immensely to engagement in robbery, and rapes.

Recommendations

1. Government at all level should encourage on family planning in order to help control rate of child bearing to a bearable size to avert child labour.
2. Government should be fair to the citizens by creating enough employment to the masses and empowering the youths on different ss of reproductive health by government and NGOs in order to educated the parent on the importance of child to the families, communities and countries. skill to avert poverty.

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