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**Child Abuse and Social Integration of Public Primary School Pupils in Anambra South Senatorial District of Anambra State, Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

*Child abuse has been reported incessantly among primary school children. Its consequences are far reaching and take its toll on the social and academic development of school children; this study examined the influence of child abuse on the social integration of primary school pupils in Anambra South Senatorial District of Anambra State. The child abuse variable under examination in this study were child undermining, coercion and domestic violence which seem to be the most common indices of child abuse among school age pupils. The population of the study comprised 7,040 primary five pupils. The sample size of the study was 704 primary five pupils representing 10% of the population. Two instruments were used for data collection in the study they were Abused Pupil Identification Questionnaire, (APIQ) with a reliability coefficient of 0.83 and Pupils Social Integration Questionnaire (PSIQ) with a reliability coefficient of 0.84. The instruments were validated by experts in child psychology, early childhood education and measurement and evaluation. Three hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance, using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The result indicated that there is significant influence of child undermining, coercion and domestic violence on pupils social integration. Based on the findings of the study recommendations were made, among which The government at all levels should fortify the vehicle for the fight against child abuse by setting up child abuse court specifically to ensure that culprits of child abuse are actually prosecuted and punished without judicial delays.*

***Keywords: Child Abuse, Social and Academic Development, School Children***

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**Introduction**

The birth of a child into the traditional African home is marked by jubilation and a lot of rejoicing. Both the immediate family - parents, grandparents, relations, and the entire community- neighbors', friends and even children, all share in the joy of the arrival of the newest member. Families pray earnestly to God, some perform rituals and sacrifices to their ancestors and gods so that they would be blessed with children because they believe that children ensure the continuity of the lineage and community (Isamah & Okunola, 2002), Uyoata (2004) observe that in the Nigerian context, children are the yardstick for measuring successful marriages. In other words, a childless marriage is regarded as unsuccessful and childless couples are looked

upon as being under some kind of curse; in fact, they are despised and, especially the wife suffer enormous psychological trauma.

Once a child is born, the onus is placed on the family and other members of the community to ensure that the child is properly protected from any kind of harm and guided into becoming an acceptable and productive member of the society. It is obvious then that a child is a celebrated blessing not only by the family but also by the larger community. This illustrates the high premium that African families place on children. Uyoata (2004) captures this by describing the child as 'a family's crowning glory'. Nevertheless, some families and members of the society see children differently from the picture painted above. The innocence and dependence of children on adults for nurture, protection and survival is sometimes seen as too much trouble and responsibility, and in an attempt to get rid of the troubles, adults and significant others resort to diverse kinds of measures which may amount to abuse of the child.

Once abuse sets in, it has the tendency to disrupt the natural flow in children's total development which most often lead to either internal or external deformation, and in some cases both. All forms of child abuse is capable of disrupting the developmental process, when children's social development process is disrupted, it creates a form of disconnect in the entirety of their social relationships. This makes a child to be withdrawn, isolated and feels like a misfit in the world of peer social interaction. Every child needs a healthy, active and lively social integration among parents, peers, teachers and significant others. It is only in such atmosphere that the child makes meaningful living and progress through school and participates effectively in community affairs. Hughes & Gove (2008) opined that social integration is an attribute of social situations arising from the density of social interaction and as characterized by strong common sentiments and by intensification and fortification of the meaning of life, of social regulation, and of constraint.

A lack of social integration and the consequential absence of a structured social life have been characterized under the label anomie, which means, more generally, a state of normlessness and isolation, with correspondingly weakened ties to the larger society. Social integration is viewed as product of social development. In other words, the ability to be socially integrated is evidence that the individual was properly and positively socialized to become an acceptable, productive and manageable member of the society. The curriculum for social integration is hinged on acquisition of social skills and positive social behaviors. A child, who experiences uninterrupted process of social development, evidenced by the absence of abuse, would, in the absence of any biological/hereditary consequences, acquire such social skills as empathy, self-control, balanced self-esteem, self-respect, leadership skills, etc, which paves way for him to be properly adjusted and thereby integrated into his community. On the other hand, a child, whose social development process is truncated and altered by the introduction of any form of abuse- verbal, domestic violence, coercion, child undermining and intimidation, would lack such social skills as listed above, and would have difficulty with social relationships, even in adulthood.

Incidences of child abuse make headlines on news media, national dailies, magazines and the internet today. Forms of child abuse commonly reported among school age children include, verbal abuse, child undermining, coercion, intimidation and domestic violence. Incidentally, majority of the perpetrators of these abuses seem to be the very persons upon whose shoulders the care and upbringing of these children rest. Such children are denied the warmth, love, care, affection, bonding and support that are essential for developing a Child's emotion. Whether children suffer one or a combination of these abuses, the by-product of abuse on children is a distortion of their social developmental processes. Psychologists like Jean Piaget, Sigmund

Fraud, Erick Erikson, all agree that human development progresses in stages, and that interruption at one stage holds consequences for personality outcome of the individual. Positive personality is critical for social relationships and integration into social groups. Social integration is the ability to achieve satisfactory social relation with other members of the society; it incorporates cooperation-based strategies that increase positive connections, acceptance, and interactions between people living in society.

Child abuse and neglect have both physical and psychological effects. The effects can be divided into short-term and long-term consequences. In the short term, the physical impact spans the spectrum from minor scrapes and bruises to extremely severe injuries or even death (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013). Psychologically, short-term effects of abuse include isolation, fear, and an inability to trust (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013). These in turn can lead to long-term impacts, including low self-esteem, depression, and relationship difficulties that can last well into adulthood. This is why the holy book admonished parents to train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6 KJV).

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) defined child abuse as any behavior that causes significant harm to the child's health and development is considered as an abuse of the child. Suffice it to say that child abuse is the physical, psychological or emotional, sexual maltreatment and neglect of children. It may manifest as verbal abuse, child undermining, coercion, domestic violence and intimidation. It therefore follows that any form of contact an adult makes with a child which results in any form of harm, whether seen or not seen; manifest immediately or at a later time, is tantamount to child abuse.

These acts of child abuse tend to occur on daily basis. Some children who are of school age are on the streets hawking, Statistics show that about eight million children of school age are out of school in Nigeria (Amagiya, 2012). Some are trapped in baby factories; many are trafficked as sex slaves sent out for prostitution. Most of them live on the streets and become hoodlums later. Some of these children are even used for rituals nowadays (Amagiya, 2012).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Having served as child educator, pre-teen, teenage and youth counselor for over fifteen years, the researcher observed as well as encountered first hand, children who struggle to cope with the trauma from diverse kinds of child abuse, who tend develop anti-social behaviors, such as depression, aggression, withdrawn behavior and in some cases substance abuse. In they seem to hardly get along with their peers, participate properly and freely in groups activities and get integrated into the social setting of the school and society. This seems to have severe consequences on their social and academic developments. The focus of the present study is to examine the influence of child abuse - child undermining, coercion and domestic violence pupils' social integration within the school environment.

### **Hypothesis**

The following null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant influence of child undermining on primary school pupils' participation in classroom activities
2. There is no significant influence of coercion on primary school pupils' participation in peer-activity activities..

3. There is no significant influence of domestic violence on primary school pupils' participation in group membership.
4. There is no joint influence of child undermining, coercion and domestic violence on primary school pupil's social integration.

### **Population of the Study**

The population of the study comprised all the 7, 040 primary five pupils in all the public primary schools in Anambra South Senatorial District in the 2014/2015 academic session.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The sample size for the study is (704) primary five pupils which covered 10% (704) of the entire population of 7,040. This sample was selected from 44 public primary schools. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed for this study. Cluster sampling technique was used as sampling unit at each stage except for the last stage which involved the sampling of pupils. For the purpose of this study, Anambra South Senatorial District was divided into seven clusters- Aguata, Ekwusigo, Ihiala, Nnewi North, Nnewi South, Orumba North, Orumba South. From these clusters, four were randomly selected using the Cap and Drop method. The four clusters are Aguata, Ekwusigo, Nnewi South, Orumba North. Cap and Drop method was also used to select four towns from each of the clusters as follows Aguata- Ekwulobia, Ezinifite, Igbo-ukwu and Uga, Ekwusigo- Ichi, Ihembosi; Oraifite and Ozubulu; Nnewi South- Ekwlummili, Unubi, Amichi and Osumenyi; Orumba North- Awgbu, Oko, Nanka and Ndikelionwu. Purposive stratified random sampling technique was used to select the public primary schools from each of the towns. Simple random sampling technique was then used to select pupils from each of the school sampled. To justify the sample for the study, the researcher adopted the recommendations of (Kothari, 2012), that sample for the study of specific population could be a minimum of 40% for a few thousand, 20% for many hundreds, 10% for few hundreds and at most 5% for several hundreds. The sample size of 10% is therefore considered appropriate for this study.

### **Instrumentation**

Two instruments were used for this study. Both instruments were researcher developed questionnaire. The first instrument was Abused Pupil Identification Questionnaire, (APIQ) it was divided into two parts. Part A sought information on the age and caregiver of pupils while part B contained 25 child abuse information eliciting items using four likert rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The pupils were requested to tick the option that best suits them. The items were grouped under three sub-sections, representing the three variables of the independent variable, Child Abuse. The second instrument, Pupils Social Integration Questionnaire (PSIQ) equally took the same format and also contained 25 social integration information eliciting items covering the three social integration variable identified.

### **Validation of Instrument**

The instruments (APIQ) and (PSIQ) were given to three experts in childhood development psychology, educational evaluation and counseling for face validity. The input, comments and suggestions of the experts were incorporated into the final draft of the instrument to ensure its validity.

### Reliability of Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was established by administering the instrument on 50 primary five pupils in a public primary school in one of the local government areas in Anambra South Senatorial District that was not selected for the study. The data was analyzed using Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient to establish the reliability index of the instrument. The result showed reliability index of .83 and .84 for the two instruments (APIQ) and (PSIQ) respectively.

### Method of Data Analysis

Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Coefficient was used to test the hypotheses; and Multiple Regression Analysis was used to determine the joint influence of child undermining, coercion and domestic violence on the social integration of primary school pupils. All null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance.

### Results

#### Hypothesis One

There is no significant influence of child undermining on pupil's participation in classroom activities.

**Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the influence of child undermining on participation in classroom activities**

Variables	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	r-cal	r-crit
	$\sum y$	$\sum y^2$			
Child undermining	1824	5652	4719	1.010	0.088
Participation in Classroom activities	1818	5554			

**\*significant at .05 alpha level and 703 degree of freedom (df)**

Table 1 shows the summary of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) of the significant influence of child undermining on pupil's participation in class activities. The result of the analysis shows an r-value of 1.010 and an rcrit value of 0.088 at .05 alpha level and 703 df. Since the real is greater than the rcrit, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is significant influence of child undermining on pupil's participation in class activities.

#### Hypothesis 2

There is no significant influence of coercion on pupil's participation in peer play activities.

**Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the influence of coercion on participation in peer play activities**

Variables	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	r-cal	r-crit
	$\sum y$	$\sum y^2$			
Coercion	1930	6190	5284	1.047	0.088
Participation in Peer play activities	1941	6043			

**\*significant at .05 alpha level and 703 degree of freedom (df)**

Table 2 shows the summary of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) of the significant influence of coercion on pupil's participation in peer play activities. The result of the analysis shows an r-value of 1.047 and an r-crit value of 0.088 at .05 alpha level and 703 df. Since the rcal is greater than the rcrit, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is significant influence of coercion on pupil's participation in peer play activities.

**Hypothesis 3**

There is no significant influence of domestic violence on pupil's group membership with peers.

**Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the influence of domestic violence on pupil's group membership with peer**

Variables	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	r-cal	r-crit
	$\sum y$	$\sum y^2$			
Domestic violence	2094	6934	6315	2.066	0.088
Group membership	2138	7128			

**\*significant at .05 alpha level and 703 degree of freedom (df)**

Table 3 shows the summary of the significant influence of domestic violence on pupil's group membership with peers. The result of the analysis shows an r-value of 2.066 and an rcrit value of 0.088 at .05 alpha level and 703 df. Since the rcal is greater than the rcrit, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is significant influence of domestic violence on pupil's group membership with peers.

**Hypothesis 4**

There is no significant joint influence of Child Undermining, Coercion and Domestic Violence on the social integration of primary school pupils.

**Table 4: Regression analysis for joint influence of verbal abuse, Child Undermining, Coercion, intimidation and Domestic Violence on the social integration of primary school pupils.**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Fcal	fcrit	Decision
1 Regression	4.545	5	.909	0.924	0.235	*
Residual	686.920	699	.984			
Total	691.464	704				

**\*= significant at .05 alpha level and (5,699) df**

Table 4 shows the multiple regression analysis for the significant joint influence test of verbal abuse, Child Undermining, Coercion, intimidation and Domestic Violence on the social integration of primary school pupils. The result shows an fcal value of 0.924. At .05 alpha level and 5, 699 degree of freedoms, the fcrit is 0.235. Since the fcal is greater than the fcrit, the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, there is a significant joint influence of verbal abuse, Child Undermining, Coercion, intimidation and Domestic Violence on the social integration of primary school pupils.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study was discussed based on the hypotheses earlier stated and tested at 0,05 level of significance.

#### **Influence of child undermining on primary school pupils' participation in classroom activities**

Hypothesis 1 shows that there is significant influence of child undermining on primary school pupil's participation in classroom activities. This implies that child undermining has considerable influence on pupil's participation in classroom activities. This must not be overlooked because being undermined may condition the children to be socially, emotionally and physically uncoordinated. Child undermining may have been accepted as part of the cultural and social structure in which children find themselves. This is corroborated by Kay (2004) who posits that child abuse is a socially constricted phenomenon which reflects values and opinions of a particular culture at a particular time. Gibbons, Terry & Parcerk (2005), observe that the sorts of behaviors that are deemed to be abusive to children change with time and differ between cultures as the society's view of such behaviors change. More so, Busari, Danesy and Gesinde (2007) reiterated that abuse and neglect may be conditioned by people's culture, religion, educational level and experiences with child bearing and rearing. Though classroom activities are controlled and moderated under the watchful eyes of the teacher who ensures each child is guided to participate appropriately. This does not rule out the possibility of abused children being left out of the classroom activities. Children may participate in activities to fulfill all righteousness and to avoid further troubles from the teacher, hence they must strain to cope and conform to in order to avoid anomic situations. This situation is captured by Merton's classic Social Structure and Anomie(2003) which presented the formulation of strain theory, highlighting the internal struggle to respond to external, societal pressures. Merton holds that societies are structured with culturally defined goals, purposes, and interests which children may pursue according to prescribed institutional norms and means. Children internalize societal goals and the acceptable means by which they may be achieved, (even if it serves just to avoid further troubles or hampers their personal development). The children may then experience strain as they respond to avenues to achieving the desired goals. Having experienced strain, they select one of five modes of adaptation in response to the condition. The most common mode is conformity, wherein the children conform to both cultural goals and institutional means. Cohen (2005) notes that although most children may carry a chronic load of frustration, they continue to conform because it is the only acceptable avenue according to their reference groups. The very stability of society is contingent on the dominance of this adaptation.

Suffice it to be said that cultural child rearing practices in Nigeria, especially with the Igbos, expose children to pursue cultural goals which build them up and prepare them in laudable ways for their different roles in the society. This creates adequate platform for them to pursue positive visibility and popularity through conventional means while maintaining a socially acceptable physical appearance. Notwithstanding, care must be taken to ensure that the children are exposed to developmentally appropriate practices and adequately supervised at each stage to avoid such practices deteriorating to abuse.

#### **Influence of coercion on primary school pupils' participation in peer-play activities**

Hypothesis 2 shows that there is a significant influence of coercion on primary school pupil's participation in peer-play activities. Children of abusers, who are controlled by the use of

coercion, grow up terrorized and not feeling safe. (Kuh and Love, 2000) say that Social integration refers to students' level of social and psychological comfort with their colleges' milieus, association with or acceptance by affinity groups, and a sense of belonging that provides the security needed to join with others in common causes, whether intellectual or social". Play is a very important avenue for children to form affinity. It is the aspect of social integration which gives a child sense of belonging and a feeling of acceptance. When children are coerced either by parents, teachers, peers or significant others, they tend to lose this sense and feeling of acceptance hence they shy away from playing with their peers for fear of being coerced as other times. The emotional effects of coercion are more damaging to a child than to a child who has been beaten.

A child growing up in coercion will always be wishing for something bad to happen in order for them to relieve their anxiety of waiting for something bad to happen. The strongest indicator of sexual abuse is sexual acting out and inappropriate sexual knowledge and interest. Victims may withdraw from school and social activities and exhibit various learning and behavioral problems including cruelty, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), conduct disorder, and oppositional defiant disorder (ODD).

#### **Influence of domestic violence on pupils' participation in group membership.**

Hypothesis 3 shows that there is significant influence of domestic violence on primary school pupil's group membership. Children who are exposed to domestic violence display a good number of the following negative peer interactions behaviors grabbing, pushing, name calling, violent fights, and so on. In other words, the children have difficulty getting a friend's attention, sharing objects, asking for a favor, providing a play idea to peers, saying something nice to a friend and entering group play. Exposure to domestic violence makes behavior problems to become more serious with increased internalized behavior difficulties: depression, isolation, withdrawal, emotional difficulties, shame, fear, confusion, rage, poor social skills.

Enwereji (2007) specifically listed effects of domestic violence on primary grade children to include: nightmares, eating disorders, nervousness, stuttering, depression, drug/alcohol abuse, bedwetting, lying, stealing, truancy and psychosomatic complaints while the effects on teenagers include: withdrawal, anger, drug/alcohol abuse, suicide attempts truancy and violent behaviors. Enwereji (2007) agrees that all these leave the children traumatized, with a sense of helplessness, hopelessness, worthlessness and low self-esteem. In essence, the children's social functioning ability is stalled, making it difficult, if not impossible for them to be able to build relationships of trust which is fundamental to group membership.

#### **Joint influence of child undermining, coercion and domestic violence on pupils' social integration**

Hypothesis 4 showed that there is significant joint influence of child undermining, coercion and domestic violence on pupil's social integration. This finding corroborates the finding of Child of Gibbons, Terry & Parcerk (2005) that pupils social integration and group membership is hampered to a large extent as they experience various kinds of abuse at different times and places. Undermining was found to have significant influence on primary school pupils' participation in classroom activities; being undermined may condition the children to be socially, emotionally and physically uncoordinated. Child undermining may have been accepted as part of the cultural and social structure children find themselves in and must strain to cope and conform to in order to avoid anomic situations. When children are coerced either by parents, teachers,



peers or significant others, they tend to lose this sense and of acceptance hence they shy away from playing with their peers for fear of being coerced further.

Enwereji (2007) and Copeland et al (2013) agreed with the finding of this study that children who are exposed to domestic violence have difficulty getting a friend's attention, sharing objects, asking for a favor, providing a play idea to peers, saying something nice to a friend and entering group play. In essence, the children's social functioning ability is stalled, making it difficult, if not impossible for them to be able to build relationships of trust which is fundamental to group membership.

### **Conclusions**

This study examined the influence of child abuse on pupil's social integration. The ability to be socially integrated with peers is an indispensable component of children's social development; hence, lack of social integration is a strong pointer to a dysfunctional development in children. The onus therefore rest squarely on the parents and significant others in the life of the child to protect the child against and forma of abuse as the consequences and trauma id Farr reaching in the social development of the child. A society that is free of child abuse is a society that has a hope for the future.

### **Recommendations**

Based on these findings, the following recommendations was made.

1. Parents and care-givers should be enlightened through campaigns to desist from speaking to and treating children in such manners as are contrary to the best interest of the children, considering the destructive by-product of such acts.
2. Awareness campaigns against child abuse and its' consequences should be number one priority of the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved children advocacy, both in the cities and hinterlands.
3. The government at all levels should fortify the vehicle for the fight against child abuse by setting up child abuse court specifically to ensure that culprits of child abuse are actually prosecuted and punished without judicial delays.
4. Government should establish and fund functional national child abuse research and information centers and provide toll-free telephone services to facilitate reporting of incidences of abuse.
5. Rehabilitation education and centers, staffed with adequately trained childhood education personnel should be provided for abused children to create avenue for subsequent re-integration into peer society as acceptable members.

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