

Family Values and Abusive Tendencies of Secondary School Students in Akwa Ibom State: Implication for Education in the 21st Century

***¹Asukwo Sunday Nseabasi, ²Catherine Ubong Akpan, and ³Anietie Bello Inyang**

*¹Department of Educational Foundations, Akwa Ibom State College of Education, Afaha Nsit
Email: nseabasi2k15@gmail.com

²Department of Curriculum and Teaching, Akwa Ibom state college of Education, Afaha Nsit, Nigeria **Email:** katebrilliant14@gmail.com **ORCID:** <https://orcid.org/0009-007-6872-4565>

³Department of Business Education, College of Education, Afaha Nsit, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. **Email:** anietienng@gmail.com

Abstract

The study aimed at determining the relationship between family values and abusive tendencies of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State: Implication for Education in the 21st Century. Two purposes of the study, two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted the correlational research design. The population of the study comprised all the 12,400 senior secondary two (SS2) students in the 250 public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. A sample size of 1,240 senior secondary two (SS2) students which represents 10 percent of the study population was selected for the study using multi-stage sampling procedure. A total number of 7 sampled Local Government Areas, 28 sampled schools as well as 20 percent of Senior Secondary 2 students per school were selected for the study using balloting method of random sampling. A self-structured questionnaire entitled "Family Values and Abusive tendencies of Students Questionnaire (FVATSQ)" was used for data collection. To establish the reliability of the FVATSQ, data were subjected to test of correlation and Cronbach Alpha statistics was applied for test of internal consistency of the instrument, which yielded the overall reliability index of 0.76 and 0.89 for the independent and dependent variables respectively. Data generated was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics, and the findings showed a very high positive and significant relationship between respect for human dignity, self-discipline and abusive tendencies of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. Conclusion was drawn from the research findings while the researcher recommends among other things that, parents should maintain a sense of dignity in the family by addressing members with a polite, cheerful and amiable voice so that the young can speak to others with dignity and respect while in school.

Keywords: Family, Values, Abusive Tendencies

Introduction

The family is a fundamental social unit in the society consisting of parents and children. It is a socially recognized group usually formed by marriage, cohabitation or adoption that forms an emotional connection and serves as an economic unit in the society. The family gives the child belongingness which makes him to feel happy and comfortable. In the course of social interaction within the family, parents and adults members are expected to teach children values and right patterns of tendencies in order to shape their attitude, perception, aspirations and their value system. According to Dzintra and Marite (2016), family can be defined as basic societal unit, and the task of the society is to offer all the necessary support and protection to the family, so that the family can undertake all the responsibilities to ensure a favourable environment for the harmonious development of a child.

One of the most outstanding roles of parents in children upbringing is to educate them on certain beliefs and values which are morally accepted by the society. As observed by Epstein (2011) educating young ones on approved ethical values and patterns of tendencies is very essential in children's tendencies development and response to challenging conditions. The author added that parents behoove the responsibility of teaching and modelling moral values if they wish their children to become functional in character and learning. Such values include respect for human dignity, display of compassion, empathy, honesty, integrity among others.

Abusive behaviour of students may be verbal, physical, psychological, sexual, emotional, financial, and spiritual hence, this study emphasizes on verbal bullying or abuse because in Akwa Ibom State, Irozuru and Ukpong (2015) revealed a high level of aggressive tendencies resulting from verbal abuse or bullying among students.

Globally, in relation to verbal bullying or abuse, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2019) reported that 32 percent of school children are victims of verbal bullying. Nuning *et al.* (2020) added that students in most countries of world suffer violence, bullying and discrimination. The agency added that globally, more than 240 million children suffer gender-based violence in or around schools every year, and that every one in three students experience verbal bullying. This is quite outrageous. As observed by Teicher *et al.* (2011), abusive tendency of students is most times attributed to family values. The author further explained that

most parents have not been so committed towards educating their children on moral values and principles that are beneficial to individual and societal progress. Johnson *et al.* (2010) supported that abusive tendency among students is as a result of parents failure in teaching and modeling acceptable moral values for their children to imitate.

A student that embraces good morals would likely not be involved in actions or tendencies that are against the official rules and regulations of the school such as rendering verbal and physical abuse. Emphasizing on the role of parents in children moral development, Claudia and Dias (2012) observed that parents behove the paramount responsibility of modelling good conduct and tendencies so that children can emulate. The author added that moral rectitude can only be strengthened if young ones are taught by their parents' values that are upright and fit for societal progress. Children whose parents teach and model good moral values and who understand the consequences of showing immoral acts would likely choose the right path of behaving fruitfully even if other students choose the wrong path of abuse.

A family shares goals and values which reinforces relationship and cohesion in the family. Gulnara and Roza (2016) explained that family values are what the family cherishes and teaches the children. These values have lasting impact on the attitude and tendencies of the children. Values as a concept is simply a complex and ethical trait that makes the character of a person. Mark and David (2008) viewed values as a stable and distinctive qualities built into an individual's life which determines his/her response to circumstances. Human values, according to Glenn (2010), are those qualities that we approve of in people; such are honesty, fairness, respect, decency, generosity, integrity, kindness, courage among others. Based on the above definitions, we can say that family values are those distinctive qualities, which are ethical and which a family shares for the common good of its members. Values unite the family and also help to enrich and guard the intimacy of the family members.

Values are what we cherish most in our lives. Our values influence our orientations, actions, reactions and interpretations. Values can also be referred to as principles or standards hold in high esteem by the society. Family values, according to Adebawale (2014) can be defined as beliefs or way of life transmitted by a family environment into the individual which guides the individual in his actions within and outside the family world. Within the family, the interactions are guided by these values only and this practice of

following the values extends outside the family as well. It is apt to observe that for constructing a good sustaining society, family is the basic unit which needs to be given attention. Family values can be guided by disposition, depending on the type of family structure.

Abusive tendencies is the use of harshly or coarsely insulting language with the intent of hurting the feelings of another person (Ngozi and Patricia, 2018). Abusive tendencies are various tendencies which may be aggressive, coercive or controlling, destructive, harassing, intimidating, isolating, or threatening, that an abuser may use to control a domestic partner, child or other peoples. Someone who is abusive behave in cruel and violent way towards other people. Alink *et al.* (2011) noted that abusive tendencies can take many forms. The authors added that abusive tendencies include being violent or aggressive making threats, controlling someone's tendencies, putting them down, verbally abusing them, taking or keeping money from them and putting pressure on someone to have sex or do things they don't feel comfortable with.

As noted by Kerr and Nelson (2009), students could develop abusive tendencies when such tendencies is initiated by parents. A student could be aggressive and tough to other students if he or she imitates the aggressive tendencies from the home. Verbal abuse which is very significant in this study, also known as verbal bullying is the act of directing offensive statements toward someone with the intent of causing emotional harm. Verbal abuse consists of tendencies that are non-physical, but which can still be rather damaging, such as being threatening, insulting, or humiliating toward someone. Abuse is the improper usage or treatment of a thing, often to unfairly or improperly gain benefit (Doyle and Timms, 2014). Abuse can come in many forms, such as: Physical or verbal maltreatment, injury, assault, violation, rape, unjust practices, crimes, or other types of aggression. Students may become abusive when they encounter frustrating situations which they believe are beyond their control. Students are especially sensitive to verbal abuse. Typically, the more verbal abuse a child suffers, the more problems the child is likely to develop as a result. It does not matter how old the child or when the abuse occurs for it to have a damaging and lasting effect. What matter most is that if a child is from abusive home, such abusive act performed by family member could have long standing effect on their social tendencies in school.

Some family values could influence abusive tendencies of secondary school students. One of such value is disrespect for human dignity. An individual who value respect, and treat another person in a fair and judicious manner could be referred to as having respect for human dignity. According to Glenn (2010), fathers who treat the mothers of their children with respect in words and deeds and deal with conflict within the relationship in an appropriate manner, without physical threat to life and abusive languages, will likely have children who will treat others the same way. They are less likely to be abusive to teachers and fellow students. Glenn added that the opposite will be the case to children whose parents disrespect the dignity of family members.

Another aspect of family values which may influence abusive tendencies tendency of students is level of social confidence. This is the quality that gives a child the confidence to control fear in the face of people and to hold firm for what is right. This value can make a student refuse to abuse fellow school mates and teachers, even though others do so. This is because as noted by Preeti and Emerson (2012), such children have been taught by their parents how to make reasonable moral judgments on conditions that may interfere with learned moral values and principles.

Self-discipline as a family value may reduce abusive tendencies of students in secondary schools. It is the ability for an individual to assume some social and moral roles without being ask to do them, taking responsibility for his or her actions. A self-disciplined family, would create a conducive and stimulating environment for members to actualize and enjoy their moral roles without being influenced by another person, taking responsibility of their actions particularly when faced with difficult circumstances. Children who are reared from such family according to Bear (2008), are most likely to act based on what they know to be morally right such as maintaining good interpersonal relationship devoid of abuse with both the teachers and fellow classmate.

Statement of the Problem

Verbal abuse or verbal bullying in schools is a pattern of negative tendencies that is common among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. This tendency leads directly from one student to another because of an imbalance in power that aims to hurt the feelings of a weaker student. This situation is very alarming in Akwa Ibom State, as most students often carry out different forms of verbal abuses like labelling, yelling, scolding, spreading gossip, slandering and rendering of accusations and insulting language.

As commonly observed by the researcher, the most annoying part is that most students usually use offensive expressions which contained swear and rude words against their fellow classmates, friends as well as teachers. Insulting expressions like “God punish you, son of a bitch, bastard, idiot, big head, cocoanut head, rubbish among other derogatory statement are often used by the students to express their annoyance over a conflicting issue. Abuses are always used by students to control or maltreat recessive classmates and to disrespect their integrity, feelings and emotions.

Also, it is commonly observed that some students harass fellow students including the teachers using verbal approach of sexual jokes. While some students derive pleasure in criticizing, insulting or denouncing fellow students, others display acts of anger and hostility, which happens to be a destructive form of communication, intended to harm the self-concept of other persons and produce negative emotions and physical discomfort. This situation seems to be very worrisome as schools keep producing some graduates without good morals and sound ethical values, exhibiting abusive tendencies that are inimical to the peaceful existence of the school and society.

Although several researches have been carried out on abusive tendencies of students, it was observed in the course of information gathering on the internet that previous researches dwell much on sexual abuse, physical abuse, psychological and domestic abuse. Little have been done on verbal abuse or verbal bullying tendencies of students in connection with family values used in this study, some of which are dignity, social confidence, self-discipline, obedience, humility, tolerance, empathy and integrity. Also, no empirical study has been carried out in Akwa Ibom State in relation to family values and abusive tendencies of students. Therefore, it is on this premise that this research seeks to determine the relationship between family values and abusive tendencies of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, taking into consideration the aforementioned variables.

Objectives of the Study

The major purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between family values and abusive tendencies of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

- I. The relationship between family value of human dignity and abusive tendencies of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

- II. The relationship between family value of self-discipline and abusive tendencies of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised:

- I. What is the relationship between family value of human dignity and abusive tendencies of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?
- II. What is the relationship between family value of self discipline and abusive tendencies of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance

- I. There is no significant relationship between family value of human dignity and abusive tendencies of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.
- II. There is no significant relationship between family value of self discipline and abusive tendencies of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Methodology

The correlational research design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. Akwa Ibom State has ten (10) educational zones. These offices are located in different parts of the state, including Uyo, Ikot Ekpene, Oron, Ikono, Etinan, Ikot Abasi, Itu, Abak, Ukanafun, and Eket. The activities of these zonal offices are coordinated by the Inspectorate Services Directorate of the Ministry of Education. The population of the study comprised all the 12,400 senior secondary two (SS2) students in the 250 public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. A sample size of 1,240 senior secondary two (SS2) students was selected for the study, using multi-stage sampling procedure which represents 10 percent of the study population. A self-structured questionnaire titled “Family Values and Abusive tendencies of Students Questionnaire (FVATSQ)” was used for data collection. The FVATSQ was scored using a four point rating scale of:

Strongly Agree (SA) = 4; Agree (A) = 3; Disagree = 2; Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. Face and content validity of the instrument was determined by one expert in the Sociology of Education and two experts in Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was determined through Cronbach Alpha reliability technique. This yielded the reliability co-efficient of .76. The research instruments were administered on the respondents in their respective schools by the researcher together with two trained research assistants. Data generated were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at .05 level of significance and at 1238 degree of freedom.

Results

Research Question One: What is the relationship between respect for human dignity and abusive tendencies of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?

Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used for answering the research questions, using the r-value to determine the magnitude or weight of relationship between variables.

Table 1: Correlation analysis of responses between respect for human dignity and abusive tendencies of secondary school students

Variables	n	$\sum x$ $\sum y$	$\sum x^2$ $\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r-value	Remark
Respect for Human Dignity (x)	1240	17334	245295			
Abusive tendencies of Students (y)	1240	17541	256169	257784	.631	High Positive Relationship

Source: Field data (2024)

Result in Table 1 shows a correlation value of .631. From the decision rule, it is noticed that a high positive relationship exists between respect for human dignity and abusive tendencies of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. The implication of this result is that students are most likely to use derogatory or insulting language in schools if parents frequently used negative comments on family members and vice versa.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between self-discipline and abusive tendencies of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 2: Correlation analysis of responses between self-discipline and abusive tendencies of secondary school students

Variables	n	$\sum x$ $\sum y$	$\sum x^2$ $\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r-value	Remark
Self-Discipline (x)	1240	17114	241636			
Abusive tendencies of Students (y)	1240	17541		276493	.732	Very High Positive Relationship
			256169			

Source: Field data (2024)

Result in Table 2 reveals a correlation value of .732. From the decision rule, it is seen that a very high positive relationship occur between self-discipline and abusive tendencies of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. The implication of this result is that students are most likely to use foul words when interacting with school mates if parents fail to inculcate in them the skills and abilities to control their feelings and emotions when provoked.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between respect for human dignity and abusive tendencies of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used for testing of hypotheses by comparing the r-value with the critical value, so as to determine the direction or significant of the relationship between variables all at .05 level of significance and at 1238 degree of freedom.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis between respect for human dignity and abusive tendencies of secondary school students

Variables	n	df	r-cal	r-crit	Decision
Respect for Human Dignity (x)					
Abusive tendencies of Students (y)	1240	1238	.631*	0.196	Rejected H ₀

Significant; P<.05; Source: Field data (2024)

Table 3 shows that the calculated r-value of .631 is greater than the critical value of 0.196 at the degree of freedom of 1238 and at .05 significant levels. Hence, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected, while the alternate hypothesis

is retained. This implies that there is a significant relationship between respect for human dignity and abusive tendencies of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between self-discipline and abusive tendencies of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis between self-discipline and abusive tendencies of secondary school students

Variables	n	df	r-cal	r-crit	Decision
Self-Discipline (x) Abusive tendencies of Students (y)	1240	123	.732*	0.196	Rejected H ₀

Significant; P<.05; Source: Field data (2024)

Table 4 shows that the calculated r-value of .732 is greater than the critical value of 0.196 at the degree of freedom of 1238 and at .05 significant levels. Hence, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected, while the alternate hypothesis is retained. This implies that there is a significant relationship between self-discipline and abusive tendencies of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Discussion

Results from the research question one and hypothesis one revealed a high positive and significant relationship between respect for human dignity and abusive tendencies of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. This finding is in tandem with the finding of the study conducted by Nyorere and James (2019), which revealed a very high positive and significant between respect for human dignity and students tendency to involvement in violence. It is also similar to the finding of Dixon, Graber and Brooks-Gunn (2018), that parents observance of individuals rights and dignity by significantly deter students from exhibiting abusive tendencies in the school. The reason for this is that through social interaction in the home, young ones are called to promote the sanctity and dignity of human persons irrespective of their socio-economic background. Students whose parents treat family members with dignity are most likely to understand the different strengths and weakness of their school mates; hence, having high expectations for them, both in academic and personal growth. This finding also corroborates that of Apeh and Bernice (2020), that family violence and disrespectful tendencies significantly predicts abusive tendencies and other maladaptive tendencies of

secondary school students. This is because abusive tendencies can be learned in interaction with members of the family, especially intimate individuals who assault their spouses. Thus, it is therefore observed from this finding that, when children learn abusive lifestyle in the home, they are most likely to be committed to verbal victimization in the school.

Results from the research question two and hypothesis three revealed a high positive and significant relationship between self-discipline and abusive tendencies of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. This finding conform to that of Igbe (2016), who found that parents' inability to instill proper self-discipline in their children increases the tendency of involvement in aggressive tendencies. It is also similar to the finding of Jacob and Adegboyega (2017), who found that students from low self-discipline homes were more prone to abusive lifestyle than those who are from high self-disciplined homes. The reason for this is that children in whom their parents exercise high self-discipline in their daily action would less likely nurse the tendency to engage in abusive conducts. This finding is also in tandem with the finding of the study conducted by Chen, Yarnell and Neff (2013) that, a significant relationship exists between self-discipline as a value and verbal aggression of students. Adamu (2020) supported that a significant relationship occur between students' self-discipline and aggressive tendencies of students in the study area. This was as a result of lack of proper moral values orientation from the home. On the contrary, students whose parents over look most of their children misconduct might consider engaging in verbal abuse as a normal act.

Summary/Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn: Having high respect for human dignity is strongly associated with a decrease in abusive tendencies of students. Students' are most likely to refrain from verbal bullying or abuse if parents avoid negative comments on family members at the home. High social confidence of students can be enhanced if parents teach the children the benefits of maintaining ethical standard while overcoming fear or increased pressure by school mates to be involved in verbal bullying or abuse. Self-discipline nurtured in the minds of young ones can prevent their involvement in verbal abuse particularly in conflicting situations among students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- I. Parents should maintain a sense of dignity in the family by addressing members with a polite, cheerful and amiable voice so that young can speak to others with dignity and respect while in school.
- II. Parents should teach children all aspects of moral etiquette from an early stage so that while in school, students can confidently stand up before friends and say 'no' to use of derogatory or foul words in communication.
- III. Parents should endeavor to teach their children how to evaluate and control their emotions and feeling or impulses particularly when provoked, so as to avoid being easily dive into harmful situation like verbal accusations.

Reference

- Adamu, M. (2020). Relationship between student self-discipline, academic tendencies and achievement in senior secondary schools Akko Local Government of Gombe State. *International Journal of Philosophy and Social-Psychological Sciences*, 5(2): 6-10.
- Adebowale, T. (2014). Can ideal family values be promoted in Nigeria through welfare counselling? *African Journal for the Psychological Study of Social Issues*, 17(1): 140- 146.
- Alink, L., Cichetti, D., Kim, J. and Rogosch, F. (2011). Longitudinal associations among child maltreatment, social functioning and cortisol regulation. *Developmental Psychology*, 5(2): 391-399.
- Apeh, H. and Bernice, E. (2020). Influence of family violence on maladaptive tendencies of secondary school students in Kogi State Nigeria. *International Journal of Psychology and Counselling*, 12(4): 124-130.
- Bandura, A. (1973). *Aggression: A social learning analysis*. Englewood cliffs, NJ: Prentice- Hall, 97-101p.

- Bear, G. (2008). Classroom discipline. In: A. Thomas and J. Grimes (Editors.), *Best practices in school psychology*. MD Publishers, Bethesda. 48-49p.
- Claudia, R. and Dias, F. (2012). Family: Influences in children's development and tendencies, from parents and teachers' point of view. *Psychology Research*, 2(12): 693-705.
- Dixon, J., Graber, J. and Brooks-Gunn, J. (2018). The roles of respect for parental authority and parenting practices in parent-child conflict among African American, Latino and European American Families. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 22(1): 110-119.
- Doyle, C. and Timms, C. (2014). Child neglect and emotional abuse: Understanding, assessment and response. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE. 8p.
- Dzintra, I. and Marite, K. (2016). Sustainability of family values throughout the generations as viewed by the bachelor program students. *Proceeding of the International Scientific Conference*, 1(2): 83-90.
- Epstein, R. and Street, L. (2011). The values and value of patient-centered care. *The Annals of Family Medicine*, 9(2): 100-103.
- Glenn, M. (2010). *Human values and others in the workplace*. Gp Martin Publishers, USA. 101p.
- Gulnara, F. and Roza, A. (2016). Study of family values of adolescents from families with many children formation. *International Journal of Mathematics Education*, 11(6): 1919-1926.
- Igbe, A. (2016). Relationship between parents socio-economic index and discipline on students tendency to cheat in examination in Makurdi South Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. *European Journal of Science and Research*, 4(2): 377 -388.
- Ironzuru, E. and Ukpong, M. (2015). Home environment, peer group influence and aggressive tendencies among secondary school students in

Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. *Second 21st Century Academic Forum*, 5(1): 199-207.

Johnson, J., Cohen, P., Elizabeth, S. and Andrew, E. (2010). Childhood verbal abuse and risk for personality disorders during adolescence and early adulthood. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 42(1): 16-23.

Kerr, M. and Nelson, M. (2009). Strategies for addressing tendencies problem in the classroom. *Emotional and Tendenciesal Disorders*, 2(1): 279 - 290.

Mark, E. and David, B. (2008). What makes character education programs work? Education leadership forum; Alexandra V A Association for supervision. *New World Encyclopedia*, 23(1): 79 – 81.

Ngozi, A. and Patricia, I. (2018). Domestic abuse and antisocial tendencies among students in Aba Education Zone. *Asian Research Journal of Arts and Social Science*, 5(4): 1-8.

Nuning, K., Savitri, W. and Ristiyani, E. (2020). Bibliometrics analysis in articles of verbal bullying in schools. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 8(2): 1-10.

Nyorere, O. and James, I. (2019). Core family values and tendency to non-involvement in school violence among secondary school students in Onna Education Zone, Akwa Ibom State. *Eko Journal of Educational Research*, 6(1): 25-32.

Preeti, L. and Emerson, A. (2012). Adolescent adjustment in high school students: A brief report on mid-adolescence transitioning. *Education Science and Psychology*, 3(22): 97-109.

Teicher, M., Samson, J., Pocar, A. and McGreenery, C. (2011). Hurtful words: association of exposure to peer verbal abuse with elevated psychiatric symptom scores and corpus callosum abnormalities. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 167(12): 1464-1471.

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2019). Behind the numbers: ending school violence and bullying. Paris, UNESCO. 196p.

Family Values and Abusive Tendencies of Secondary School Students in Akwa Ibom State:
Implication for Education in the 21st Century

Yarnell, L. and Neff, K. (2013). Self-compassion, interpersonal conflict resolutions and well- being. *Self and Identity*, 12(1): 146-159.