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TEENAGE VIOLENCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE: CAUSES, EFFECTS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The study of the causes, effects and possible solutions to teenage violence in secondary schools was carried out in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State. The schools used for the study were randomly selected. The population of the study comprised 2932 students. The sample for this study consisted of 1743 subjects representing 60 percent of each stratum. The instrument used was a questionnaire. The instrument was duly validated by experts and the reliability index was 0.94 which was considered adequate for the study. The instrument was administered by the researcher with the help of research assistants. The direct approach method was used. Mean scores were used in data analysis. The results obtained indicated that the causes of teenage violence included anti social family background, negative media information, making the teenager behave anti-socially affecting their lives, that of their families and the society at large. However an administrator should be concerned with the mental and social growth of students and also establish guidelines and procedures to protect the students and provide for their emotional growth. It was also recommended that the teachers should endeavour to become approachable and assessable and be role models by-being non-judgmental and supportive in their dealing with students.

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Introduction

Teenage violence is a phenomenon which appears to be on the increase in most parts of the world. It is important to note that teenagers do not only constitute major perpetrators of violence, they are also the most likely victims of violence which they commit. According to Lurk (2005), teens include people aged 15 to 19 years are more likely to encounter violence.

Teenage denotes a stage in life when a person is between the ages of 13 - 19 years (Kossly & Rosenberg 2007). Thus, teenagers are young people whose age range from 13 -19 years old. Sometimes teenagers are referred to as young adults basically when they are up to eighteen years (18yrs). In some occasions, it is also believed that at this age, they can take certain decisions about themselves and could also be guided sometimes in taking such decisions to avoid mistakes.

In Nigeria, most parents believe that for the female teenager, it is time to learn how to do chores, preparing them for the life of woman hood, marriage among others. However, in the northern parts of Nigeria, there is the believe that immediately a girl attains the age of 13 years, she is ripe enough for marriage or sometimes they go as far as marrying her off whether she likes or even knows well about the groom or not.

In modern societies today, teenagers tend to relate with each other, especially in the social institutions. They are regarded as vulnerable sets of people irrespective of their gender. This is because they can easily be influenced by their fellow teenagers or peer groups which they find themselves in. Some of these influential attitudes tend to be either positive or negative. According to Barciwilk (2015), negative or violent behaviours are learned either from parents, guardians and older persons around them. They tend to pick up their behaviour and share it within their peers.

For instance, a teenage witnesses a fight or regular fighting between his parents, or watches a movie containing violent scenes, may tend to be violent.

As observed by Boculby (2015), violence in its entire occurrence constitutes sheer human tragedy violence. It affects all aspects of life (social life). It is also found everywhere amongst group of associations; and it is active urban and rural communities. Violence occurs in families, schools work place, places of worship and during religious activities.

Teenage violence has always been a threat to any society (Anambra State inclusive). The nature of teenage violence in the state has risen dramatically in the recent time (Igbo2006). According to Boculby(2015), there is a great concern about the incidence of violence or violent behaviour among teenagers and this complex and troubling issue needs to be carefully understood by parents, teachers and other stakeholders.

Violent behaviours in teenagers can include a wide range of behaviours, which are explosive temper tantrums, physical aggression, fighting, and threats or attempt to hurt others (including herbicidal thoughts), use of weapons, cruelty to household animals, fire setting, intentional destruction of property or vandalism among others(Essuman, 2009).

Numerous research studies (Coleman,2016; Haskel, 2014) have concluded that a complex interaction or combination of factors that lead to an increased risk of violence/violent behaviour in teenagers to include:

- i. Previous aggressive or violent behaviour
- ii. Being the victim of physical abuse and /or sexual abuse
- iii. Exposure to violence in the house/ home and /or community.
- iv. Genetic (family heredity) factors.

- v. Exposure to violence through the media (TV, Movie, etc.)
- vi. Use of drugs and alcohol
- vii. Presence of fire areas in the home
- viii. Combination of stressful family socioeconomic factors (poverty) (severe deprivation, marital breakups, single parenting, unemployment, loss of support from extended family)
- ix. Brain damage from head injury.

From the above research findings, it could be observed that teenage violence involves behaviours ranging from physical fighting to more severe forms of physical assault that can result in serious injury or death.

In most secondary schools in Anambra state, personal observation indicate some teenagers especially the boys, do take laws into their hands sometimes and refuse to abide by school rules and regulations. It is usual to see fighting in school and destruction of properties all in either a display of misunderstanding between students and students or expression of disenchantment against school rules or authority.

Teenage violence is a very common occurrence in the country (and Anambra State in particular), and it is an outcome of various factors which may include the tendency among the teenage group members to establish personal as well as group supremacy among themselves, necessitating use of force against other teenagers, or as a result of being a victim in early child hood either in their family or neighborhoods.

Statement of Problem

Most secondary schools in Anambra state have witnessed cases of violent acts or behaviours such as group fighting, sexual offences, bullying, destruction of school properties, rioting, and open fight (Igbo, 2006). The violent behaviours are due to the developmental crisis, a landmark of the critical period of attitude

formation. This implies that these problems are to be expected from the secondary school students and should be taken care of so as to enhance the preference of these students in school. In the light of the above, the problem of the study was to investigate the causes, effects and possible solutions to violent behaviours among teenagers in secondary schools in Anambra state using Onitsha education zone as a case study.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided the study:

1. What are the causes of teenage violence among students in Anambra State?
2. What are the effects of teenage violence among secondary school students in Anambra State?
3. What are the solutions to teenage violence among secondary school students in Anambra State?

RESEARCH METHOD

The area of study was Onitsha Education zone of Anambra State, Nigeria. Anambra State is divided into six Educational Zones, namely: Ogidi, Awka, Onitsha, Nnewi, Aguata and Otuocho zones. This research work adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of this study consisted of SSI students in Onitsha Education Zone in 2015/2016 academic session numbering 2932 students. The sample for this study consisted of 1743 subjects representing 60 percent of each stratum. A researcher-developed questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. The instrument was duly validated by two experts in Guidance and Counselling and one expert in measurement and evaluation who examined the instrument and offered useful suggestions leading to some modifications. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha on data collected from 30 students drawn from secondary schools in Awka Education

Zone. The reliability coefficient for the instrument was found to be 0.94. The researcher used three research assistants to

visit the sampled schools and distribute the copies of the questionnaire to the respondents.

RESULTS

Research Question One: What are the causes of teenage violence among students in Anambra State?

Table 1 above presents the major causes of violent behaviour amongst students. The table shows that, apart from items 3, 4 and 10 which were rated below the cut off mark of 2.50, all other one indicate the major causes of teenage violence in Anambra State.

Table 1: Causes of Teenage Violence in Secondary Schools

S/NO	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	X	REMARK
1	Poor communication is a major cause of teenage violence	48	120	92	2	2.62	A
2	Parental abuse (i.e extreme measures of punishment) is a major cause of teenage violence.	32	168	60	6	2.66	A
3	Parental neglect is a major cause of teenage violence.	140	6	8	26	1.80	D
4	Alcoholism is a major cause of teenage violence	16	12	104	40	1.72	D
5	The media is a major cause of teenage violence.	160	60	68	6	2.94	A
6	Uncaring school Authority	228	88	0	4	3.2	A
7	Anti-social background is a major cause of teenage violence	224	120	8	0	3.52	A
8	Broken homes are a major cause of teenage violence.	184	120	20	4	3.28	A
9	Peer pressure Encourages teenage violence.	160	180	0	0	3.4	A
10	Religious beliefs/practices encourage teenage violence.	92	21	80	30	2.25	A
11	Cultural Practices encourage teenage violence	117	78	92	4	2.71	A

Research Question Two:

What are the effects of teenage violence among secondary school students in Anambra State?

Table 2 revealed that all the items here score above the criterion mean 2.50 which indicates that teenage violence affect students in several ways.

Table 2: Effects of Teenage Violence in Secondary Schools

S/NO	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	X	REMARK
11	Truancy is an effect of teen violence	88	228	4	0	3.2	A
12	Truancy as an effect of teen violence affects	120	204	4	0	3.28	A

13	learning Negligence towards school work due to violent behaviour mars learning	188	60	32	6	2.66	A
14	School drop-out as an effect of teen violence affects the zeal to learn.	72	78	117	4	2.71	A
15	Drug use and abuse by teens to gain guts to be violent will mar their ability to learn.	222	104	0	0	3.26	A
16	Violent behaviour in teens affects their ability to learn.	204	128	0	0	3.32	A

Researcher Question Three:

What are the solutions to teenage violence among secondary school students in Anambra State?

Data on table 3 show all the items were rated above the cutoff point showing the solutions to teenage violence in the secondary schools in the state.

Table 3: Solutions to Teenage Violence in Secondary Schools

S/NO	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	X	REMARK
15	School authority are to take measures that are counter -productive to teens violence	112	204	8	0	3.24	A
16	Corporal punishment is the best method for handling violent teens	72	117	78	4	2.71	A
17	Dialogue is the best method for handling violent teens	112	216	0	0	3.28	A
18	Counseling is the best method for handling violent teens.	88	228	4	0	3.2	A
19	Social activities/ extracurricular activities that encourage self expression help control teenage violence	204	128	0	0	3.32	A

Discussion of Results**Research Question one**

Several factors have been found to be responsible for violent behaviour amongst

teenagers/teenage students. From the response gotten from the items used in answering research question one, the respondents agreed that poor communication,

parental abuse etc. play a big role in instigating violent behaviour amongst teenagers.

This goes a long way to show that both the school authority and the home could be a breeding ground for violent traits in a teenager. A Child's social environment goes a long way in molding his or her character. The kind of information he or she is exposed to, the kind of personality his or her parents have, the treatment he or she gets etc. could have either negative or positive effect on him or her.

The findings of this study agree with Lindoren (2012) who found that some teenagers engage in violence, or violent behaviour due to the anti-social experiences that formed much part of their background i.e. teenagers who were brought up in an environment where people are of questionable characters and the kind of things they exposed to contribute in making them become anti-social themselves.

Research Question two

The resultant effects of teenage violence include truancy, negligence towards school work, drug-use and abuse in order to gain guts to be violent etc. A violent teenager who has been a nuisance to the school authority and has become a bad influence on students around him or her might eventually be thrown out of school. As a school dropout, the person may eventually lose the zeal to learn. This has been the case of many youths who have lost their way as teenagers. Most of them begin to see no need of going to school and taking instructions from anybody. Someone, who cannot humble himself or submit to his teachers and read his book, cannot learn the basic things he needs to know in order to be somebody in life. This is why it is expedient that education of a teenager in his adolescent stage should not be taken for granted. There is a need for the school authority to bring the teens closer to themselves, so that they can be interested in education not just in school but

every aspect of their lives. In agreement, Bariwick, (2015) found that adolescents should be exposed to, and encouraged to gain adequate education and positive information which will be helpful in their proper growth and development.

Research Question three

The school authority plays a big role in molding the character of a child. As solutions to teenage violence, the school authority could use corporal punishments, suspension, payment of fines etc. as discovered in this study. It was among others found that, parents, the teachers, councillors, head teachers and other school personnel are the set of adults that teenagers look up to. It is expedient that the school environment be made conducive and attractive. This is where extracurricular activities which the school engages the in help to create a positive impact in them. Beard and Vermon (2007) found that good communication between a teacher and his students creates a great sense of responsibility in the students. In this regard, the students can share their problems with the teacher. In the same manner, the teachers can induce a great level of self worth, self esteem and self appreciation in a teenager and teenage violence will reduce. In support of the above, John(2015), that all human beings have fairly common sociological and innate biological needs. Secondary students in particular used love, security, recognition, approval etc. which should be repressed, stimulated and gratified.

Conclusion

There is evident proof that there are various factors responsible for teenage violence in Anambra State. From the analysis of the data collected, the following conclusions were made:

- i. Par communication in the family and school is a very healthy ground for breeding aggressive and violent teens. Teenagers need to express themselves and they need to be assured that they

are being heard and understood. If the case of is otherwise, their teenagers adopt violence in order to get the attraction of school authority and then parents.

- ii. Anti-social environments contribute a great deal to teenage violence. When teenagers live in a place where they see, eat and breath/experience nothing, but violent forms of living, they tend to pick-up the best. This envelopes the school they are enrolled in, the place they live in and the kind of friends they keep.
- iii. The kind of information that teenagers are expose to go a long way in molding their character because it is from this information they get, that they carve out life's policy of their own. These clays we find mostly negative information on as video tapes and CD's, broke that have negative stories, bad music etc. All these corrupt the minds of teenagers.

Recommendations

In the light the findings of the study, the researcher made the following recommendations:

1. School authorities should learn to associate better with their students. This
2. is done by making the students their friends. Making them understand that they are not just out to condemn but to encourage them. They should get interested in their personal lives and not just their academic progress. They should make themselves accessible to students.
3. Parents should get interested in the kind of friends their children keep. They should also encourage their children to ask questions, talk about their problems and confide in them. This way, they gain the trust of their children and the bond in the family is strengthened.
4. It is also vital that they get their kids interested in positive information through good books, movies and constructive games (e.g. monopoly, here the child learns how to be financially sensible). They can do this by engaging them in healthy social activities.
5. Schools can help by taking the students in periodical excursion. This way, educational process is made interesting.
6. Parents should also co-operate with school authorities to aid them understand their children better.

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