

INFLUENCE OF MEDIA AND PEER PRESSURE ON DATING VIOLENCE AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated media dependence and peer pressure as social correlates of dating violence among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria. Five research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The instruments for data collection were Correlates of Dating Violence Scale (CDVS) and Dating Violence Scale (DVS) which were both adopted from works by previous researchers. A total of 800 samples were drawn from a population of 7265. Data gathered through the instruments were analyzed using Mean to answer the research questions and Simple regression to test the hypotheses. Findings were that media had significant relationship and influence on dating violence while peer group on the other hand does not. The study recommended among others that regulatory bodies like the National Broadcasting Commission must enforce the broadcast code to ensure that age-appropriate content is delivered to undergraduates who have been found to be greatly influenced by media. During dating, physical contacts in lonely places should be avoided to reduce chances for perpetuating violence.

Key Words: Media, Peer Group, Undergraduates, Dating Violence

Introduction

The concept of dating violence though relatively new had been a serious cause for concern in recent times. It is a significant problem not only because of its alarming nature as well as mental and physical consequence but also due to the fact that it often occurs at a point in time when relationships are supposed to be strengthened toward marital Unions (Simon, Lin & Gordon, 1998). According to Vagi, Olsen, Basile and Vivolo (2015), dating violence is defined as “the physical, sexual, psychological or the emotional violence within a dating relationship including stalking (the crime of following or harassing another person, causing him or her to fear death or injury).

According to them, this form of irresponsibility can occur in between a current or former dating partner.

Dating violence has so many words which are used to define it. They include relationship abuse, intimate partner violence, relationship violence and dating abuse. In the Western countries like the United States, Canada and in the United Kingdom, this act has been given a formal concern in that one can receive a full-scale sentence in even a tiniest act like stalking. As Glass, Fredland and Cambell (2003) noted, “all adolescents experience physical violence in their current or past dating relationship which on extreme cases may result in death.

In Nigeria precisely, the idea of dating relationship seems to lack societal and to some extent even legal backing. This may be due to some religious perception of relationship right or even cultural expectations. In some cultures, men are prone to physically abusing women. Some culture tag this as a normal right of the man over the woman even in informal dating relationship. Some societies see bullying, punching and kicking as a normal way of the man to discipline the women.

On the whole, dating serves as an important developmental milestone as individuals come to understand social and relationship goals. For many individuals, dating begins at adolescence although other unhealthy relationship may start before that age and last for a lifetime. Most often, teens even at this point think that jesting, name calling are just “normal” part of the relationship but according to Teen Research Unlimited (TRU, 2008), this is the exact point where dating violence is conceived. As they noted, this behaviour can become abusive and may develop into more serious forms of violence. Many victims also do not want to report cases of dating violence because they usually think that they will be subject to further abuse or violence from the persons involved or that they may lose the relationship in totality. This however account for the fact that upon the 95% dating violence released as data from the TRU, only about 35-40% of cases are reported annually. Also, Wolfram (2013) revealed that adolescents receive the highest number of teen violence.

Every relationship is different but the thing that makes an unhealthy and an abusive one similar is the fact that both involve power and control. Dating violence differs in perception depending on the individuals involved. While most individuals may perceive dating violence as a normal “discipline” from their partner, others on the other hand may perceive it as infringement of their rights to freedom. Sanchez et al (2008) also reported that dating violence is more prevalent in male than female. The author noted that while men are endowed with the physical prowess and positions to abuse the female, the

female on the other hand are left defenseless and with no known ways of helping themselves.

In the United States, Nigeria and other countries, the problem of dating violence is increasing on daily basis. While one will agree with the works of Sanchez et al (2008), on the male abusing the female most, one can as well reason that this is only one form of dating violence (Physical abuse). On the other hand, Kay (2015) reported that it seems females are more engaged in dating violence more than the male. According to him, female partners often engage in dating violence through emotional abuse.

Emotional abuse could be perpetuated through refusal to pick calls, double-dating, being harsh or sometimes even stalking the boyfriend too much. All these represent forms of dating violence.

A closer look at this reveals however that in Nigeria, the concept of emotional abuse is on the increase as young dating partners often involve in each of these outlined behaviours. According to relationship experts, dating violence will continue to increase in frequency and severity without intervention. The idea of “it will never happen again”, “he only hit me once” are all fallacies and untrue. In fact, it is evidenced that victims may find it hard to recognize dating violence in a span of a year or so. Also, victims or even professionals may deem physical abuse as the only source of dating violence to their ignorance of other aspect like the emotional abuse and others.

Manganello (2008) noted that there are a whole lot of factors that may be responsible for dating violence in many nations. Some of these factors may be psychological, social, ethnic, personality, religious or any other reason. However, both the victim and the culprit involved at the end may be so ignorant of the weight of the act. This implies that if the culprit is quite aware of the legal consequence, then maybe he will not be involved in such an act. On the other hand, if the victim is quite aware of the consequences and punishment for that, the victims would take advantage of it and hopefully by now the behaviour often termed dating violence would have been a thing of the past.

The media represents a very strong factor that influences the behaviours of young people and all individuals in general. This represents a collective communication, outlet or tools that are used to store and deliver information data. The media may include analog which are comprised of radio systems, historical telephone and ancient television systems. It could also be digital like computer networks. The media technology in general have since its inception made communication better and one will see this in terms of television, facebook, Twitter, instagram, whatsApp and others. All these forms of media communication have significant influence on the lives of the viewers

(Johnson, 2009). The role of the media in violent behaviour cannot be overemphasized as it apparently and on a daily basis influences our lives, the way we think, talk, walk or relate. From this premise, it could be that media has played a significant role in violence and dating violence as a whole. From day in day out, adolescence and youth watch all forms of movie fractions and behaviour on the media which certainly may have an influence on their relationship lives. Caron and Coromia (2007) have reported, "All relationships have a way of gaining external influence even when one may seem to keep it secret.

Peer group represent a cluster of friends moving together for a common purpose. Peers usually have similar characteristics, goals and aspirations. A peer group is both a social group and a primary group of people who have similar interest, age, background or social status. According to Curtis, Tepperman and Albanese (2008), "Members of peer group are likely to influence the person's belief and behaviour". This group can serve as agents of socialization as well as control and being a member of the peer group may come with advantages as well as disadvantages. This group may provide a sense of autonomy and security to the individuals. Individuals who belong to a peer group as noted earlier are likely to be influenced by what they see others do or hear within the group. At this point, individuals' relationship may be at the mercy of whatever the friends within the group advices such an individual to do especially on unique situations. This however implies that if the group members do not like any particular member partner, this may cause a negative reaction of such individual towards the partner just in order to fit "in" to the group. In the light of all these, the researchers picked up interest in investigating some social correlates of dating violence among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria.

The rate at which dating violence is on the increase constitute a source of worry to the researchers. Relationship abuse, intimate partner violence, relationship violence, dating abuse, dating violence as one may wish to call it is growing rapidly and constituting a serious threat to the right to life among individuals. Most worrisome is the fact that this threat to life and communal harmony is sometimes unnoticed. The problem of the study was to investigate social correlates of dating violence among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

The purpose of the study was to find out the:

- extent of dependence on media among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State,

- the role of peer pressure on undergraduates in tertiary institutions on Rivers State,
- find out the occurrence of dating violence among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State,
- influence of media dependence on dating violence among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State, and
- influence of peer pressure on dating violence among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

The following research questions and hypotheses, tested at 0.05 alpha level were raised to guide the study:

- What is the extent of dependence on media among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?
- What is the role of peer pressure on undergraduates in tertiary institutions on Rivers State?
- What is the level of occurrence of dating violence among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in River State?
- What is the influence of media dependence on dating violence among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?
- What is the influence of peer pressure on dating violence among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?
- There is no significant relationship between media dependence and dating violence among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State ($P < 0.05$).
- There is no significant relationship between peer pressure and dating violence among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State ($P < 0.05$).

Method

The research adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consists of all regular undergraduates in four faculties in University of Port Harcourt as well as all regular undergraduates in four faculties in Rivers State University of Science and Technology which is made up of 7265. A sample of 800 respondents involved in a relationship was used for the study. The simple random sampling technique as well as purposive sampling technique were used for the study,

Two instruments were used for this study. They were the “Correlates of Dating Violence Scale” (CDVS) and the “Dating Violence Scale (DVS). The Correlates of Dating Violence Scale is an adapted scale drawn from works

of previous researchers. The Face and content Validity of both instruments were determined by giving copies of the instrument to the project supervisor and two other experts in the department of educational psychology, guidance and counselling for vetting. After their input, the researchers made modifications in line with their corrections, before printing out final copies of the instrument. Cronbach alpha method was used to determine the reliability of both instruments. For the Correlates of Dating Violence Scale (CDVS) the reliability was determined part by part. Media has a reliability coefficient of 0.72, while peers scale has a coefficient of 0.82, and the dating violence scale has a reliability coefficient of 0.86.

The researchers adopted the direct delivery method in administering the questionnaires to the respondents. Furthermore, the researchers used the service of two research assistants. Instructions on how to fill the instrument were given to the respondents by both the assistants and the researchers. After their response, the instrument was collected on the spot. Mean was used to answer the research questions and simple regression to test the null hypotheses.

Results

Table 1: Media Dependence among Undergraduates in Tertiary Institutions

N=800				
S./No.	Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1.	I love to model celebrities' lifestyles	3.82	0.38	Agree
2.	Soap opera series/episodes have a strong	4.00	0.00	Agree
3.	influence on me.	3.82	0.38	Agree
4.	I find it so hard to stop seeking opinion	3.86	0.35	Agree
5.	from Facebook.	3.47	0.50	Agree
6.	Internet and television series make	3.68	0.47	Agree
7.	impacts over my behaviour or in my	3.32	0.47	Agree
8.	routine work.	3.47	0.50	Agree
9.	Most people in the social media have first-	3.82	0.38	Agree
10.	hand knowledge on handling relationship	3.72	0.45	Agree
	issues.	3.70		
	I always belong to a media group and			
	share my thought on relationship there			
	often.			
	I feel the only way I can get advice and			
	help is from the social media			

I equally call in on radio programmes to seek advice on relationship matters.
 I hardly listen to advice or even give relationship advice on any social media.
 I never visit any media site for relationship advice.

Sectional Mean

The analysis on Table 1 shows the role of media among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Respondents agreed with all the items. The sectional mean of 3.70 indicates that the media dependence constitutes a significant issue among undergraduates in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Peer Groups’ Role among Undergraduates in Tertiary Institutions

N=800

S./N	Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1.	I think it’s more important to be myself than to fit with a crowd.	3.72	0.45	Agree
2.		3.82	0.38	Agree
3.	At times, I would do something I know is wrong just to stay on my friends’ good side.	4.00	0.00	Agree
4.		3.43	0.50	Agree
5.	I sometimes go along with my friends just to keep them happy	3.79	0.41	Agree
6.		3.14	0.35	Agree
7.	It’s pretty hard for my friends to get one to change my mind.	3.68	0.47	Agree
8.		3.14	0.35	Agree
9.	I would break the law if only my friends say they would.	3.54	0.50	Agree
10.	I always give my time opinion in front of my friend even if I think they might make fun of me.	3.14	0.35	Agree
		3.54		
	I take more risk when am with my friends than I do when am alone.			
	I act the same way when I am alone as I do when am with my friends.			
	I sometimes say things I don’t really believe because I think it will make my friends respect me more.			
	Sometimes, I get hard on my friend in the slightest chance I get.			

Sectional Mean

The analysis on Table 2 shows the role of peer pressure among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Respondents agreed with all the items. The sectional mean of 3.54 indicates that peer pressure is of significant consequence among undergraduates in Rivers State.

**Table 3: Dating Violence among Undergraduates in Tertiary Institutions
N=800**

S./N	Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1.	It is wrong to insult my dating partner.	3.83	0.42	Agree
2.	It is wrong to tell my dating partner what to	3.82	0.54	Agree
3.	do"	2.82	0.94	Agree
4.	I should ask my partner first before going out	3.29	0.77	Agree
5.	with friends	3.60	0.61	Agree
6.	Relationships always work best when I	3.28	0.56	Agree
7.	please my partner.	2.84	0.69	Agree
8.	There is never a reason for me to threaten my	2.43	0.71	Disagree
9.	partner"	2.60	0.90	Agree
10.	Sometimes I just can't help but swear at my	2.51	1.10	Agree
11.	partner.	3.05	0.93	Agree
12.	I should always change my ways to please	2.91	0.84	Agree
13.	my partner.	2.56	0.86	Agree
14.	I should always do what my partner tells me	2.44	0.73	Disagree
15.	to do.	2.16	0.94	Disagree
16.	I do not need to know my partner's every	3.82	0.54	Agree
17.	move"	3.60	0.61	Agree
18.	There is never a good enough reason for me	2.60	0.90	Agree
19.	to swear at my partner"	2.56	0.86	Agree
20.	It is understandable when I get too angry to	2.43	0.71	Disagree
	yell at my partner.	2.96		
	It is O.K. for me to bad mouth my partner.			
	I should not control what my partner wears			
	I should not touch my partner unless he/she			
	wants to be touched."			
	It is alright for me to force my partner for a			
	kiss.			
	I Often have to be rough with my partner to			
	turn them on.			
	To prove my love, it is important for me to			
	have sex with my partner.			

If I go into my partner bedroom, I'm agreeing to have sex.
 I should not lie to my partner to get them to have sex
 It is alright to pressure my partner to have sex if he/she has had sex in the past.

Sectional Mean

The analysis on Table 3 shows the extent of dating violence among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Respondents agreed with most items but disagreed with some. The sectional mean of 2.96 however, indicates that dating violence is relatively rampant among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in River State.

Table 4: Simple Linear Regression of Relationship between Media Dependence and Dating Violence

R	R ²	Adj. R ²	Std. Error	Unstandardized B.			
0.097	0.009	0.007	11.278	0.273			
ANOVA							
	Sum of sq.	df	Mean sq.	F	α	Sig.	Result
Regression	603.779	1	603.776				Significant
Residual	63346.771	798	127.202	4.747	0.05	0.030	Reject (Ho)
Total	63950.550	799					

Table 4 indicates coefficient R= 0.097, R² = 0.009, Adjusted R²= 0.007, standard error = 11.278 while unstandardized B= 0.273. From the regression coefficient R², it could be seen that media dependence relates only about 0.9% to the occurrences of dating violence among undergraduates. The unstandardized value also revealed that for every additional increase or decrease in the values of media, there will be a corresponding 0.273 increase or decrease in the values of dating violence.

The associated analysis of variance reveals that sum of squares for regression and residual is 603.779 and 63346.771 respectively while mean square values were 603.776 and 127.202. Calculated F = 4.745 and sig= 0.030. Hence, since sig (p=0.030 <0.05) is less than 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis was rejected indicating that media dependence has a significant relationship with dating violence among undergraduates.

Table 5: Simple Linear Regression of Relationship between Peer Pressure and Dating Violence Among Undergraduates

R	R ²	Adj. R ²	Std. Error	Unstandardized B.
0.039	0.002	0.000	11.323	0.090

ANOVA							
	Sum of sq.	d.f	Mean sq.	F.	α	Sig.	Result
Regression	97.984	1	97.984				Insignificant
Residual	63852.556	798	128.218	0.764	0.05	0.382	(Accept Ho)
Total	63950.550	799					

Table 5 indicates that $R = 0.039$, $R^2 = 0.002$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.000$, standard error = 11.323 while the unstandardized B value = 0.090. From the R^2 value, there is an indication that peer pressure can only explain about 0.2% of dating violence among undergraduates. The unstandardized B also reveals that as peer pressure increases or decreases in scale, there is a corresponding 0.090 increase or decrease in the rate of dating violence among undergraduates. The associated ANOVA also reveals that calculated $F = 0.764$, while the Sig value = 0.382. Therefore, since sig ($p = 0.382 > 0.05$) is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted indicating that there is actually no significant relationship between peer pressure and dating violence among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Discussion

This study found that media dependence constitutes a significant issue among undergraduates. From the findings, it was revealed that media has a significant relationship with dating violence among undergraduates. The meaning of this finding is that what undergraduate watches on television, or hear from the radio, read through the newspapers or while browsing the web has a serious influence on their tendency to act or behave violently in their respective relationships. Most lyrics and videos contain high levels of violence (Manganello, 2008). Teens are at the forefront of modern music consumption. Video games, heavily consumed by adolescent males, can be extremely violent. For instance, if a student watches home videos or on cinemas science in which a boyfriend or girlfriend act or behave in a violent manner towards the partner, there is every tendency that they will imitate such act or behaviour. The result of the present study is in line with Bhushan and Singh (2014), who studied the effect media on domestic violence norms revealed that ninety percent of the respondent scored very high on the violence scale and majority 79% of them indicated mass media as possible causes of domestic violence among married couples and those in courtship. The study also agreed with Temple et al (2016) who associated adolescent dating violence with

virtual violence. The popularity of using text messages, social media and Internet among adolescents can create opportunities for dating violence through virtual media. It includes attitudes such as monitoring, control, harassment or verbal and emotional abuse of a partner through technology, cell phones, threatening text or voice messages, or online publications of insulting content.

Relatively rampant dating violence among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in River State has thus been attributed to media dependence which has contributed significantly to dating violence among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Media personalities are often perceived in ‘larger than life’ portraits. To this extent, their actions are usually considered sacrosanct and above board hence their actions are socially acquired by others. This might have propelled undergraduates in tertiary institutions to replay the actions of media personalities in their own lives thus portraying them to be influenced by their dependence on media to engage in media violence.

This study also found that peer pressure is of significant consequence among undergraduates. It was further established however that peer group has no significant relationship with dating violence among undergraduates. This result means that pressure from peers does not constitute substantial influence on the type of relationship and the way individual undergraduates relate with their dating partner. This result also means that undergraduates may be well enlightened that they have learnt to keep their relationship life from the influence of their peers. This result could arise because of the keen observations and experiences of individuals whose relationships have been destroyed by the interference of their friends. It is evidenced that most relationships have shattered in the process of involving friends. Hence, the findings suggest that undergraduates have learnt well from these bad experiences. The study by Weerman, Wilcox, & Sullivan (2017) is in agreement with the current findings having established that peer pressure had no significant influence on anti-social behaviours among adolescents. Micheal (2009) however noted that peer influence could be one of the reasons why most adolescents or high school students involve in physical abuse and married men as well get involved in wife battery.

Peers usually operate within the same environment with undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. They perceived each as equals and hardly count on the counsel of colleagues on relationship issues. It is common to see undergraduates accuse each other of destroying the other’s relationship. It therefore appears as though tertiary institutions students have learnt to separate their relationship from public glare and scrutiny. This explain

why although, there is strong peer pressure among them, they do not constitute significant influence of tendency to engage in violent activities during dating.

Conclusion

Dating violence is a common foreign phenomenon in contemporary Nigerian society. It happens every day, everywhere and almost every second. It may even be more rampant than domestic violence. Yet, this common enemy is overlooked daily. It has been responsible for many fights and in extreme cases, death among young people. Many factors may be responsible for it but for the purpose of this study, media, socio-economic status as well as locus of control are factors responsible for it. This problem could be handled mostly by ethical and attitudinal re-orientation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommended that;

1. Regulatory bodies like the National Broadcasting Commission must enforce the broadcast code to ensure that age-appropriate content is delivered to undergraduates who have been found to be greatly influenced by media.
2. During dating, physical contacts in lonely places should be avoided to reduce chances for perpetuating violence.
3. Families should lay a solid foundation during child upbringing to moderate the influence of peers as undergraduates embrace wider social circle in life. This will help children develop good moral values that will moderate their actions as they grow.
4. General ethical re-orientation should be encouraged on campuses. This could be done through establishment of counselling units in all universities whereby they will carry out a campus radio programme from time to time emphasizing on moral values.
5. Though peer group has an insignificant influence on dating violence, parents, teachers and other significant others should be mindful of the type of friends their children keep because this could still determine violent behaviours.

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