

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF VIOLENCE AND INFLUENCE ON EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT OF ADOLESCENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ANAMBRA STATE**

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### **Abstract**

*Man's nature of imperfection has made conflict inevitable in any human relationship. Violence will likely erupt from unresolved conflicts especially in a relationship where one or both parties suffers from various psychopathology- such as depression, anxiety, addiction or alcoholism etc which can put additional stress on the relationship. This study determined the psychological dimensions of violence and influence on emotional adjustment of adolescents in tertiary institutions in Anambra state. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted descriptive research design. The population comprised of all the academic staff and students from the nine (9) tertiary institutions in the state. A sample of 450 students was randomly drawn from the 3 forms/types of tertiary institutions using simple random sampling procedure. All 30 academic staff from the Department of Educational Psychology was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was researchers structured questionnaire titled " Psychological Dimensions of Violence Questionnaire". The validity of the instrument was determined by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha method and alpha coefficient of 0.79 was obtained. Data collected were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation for answering research questions and t-test for testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the study revealed that 20 psychological factors were identified by staff and students to be among those implicated in students violence, 20 factors were also identified as the influence of violence on adolescents' emotional adjustment while 8 psychological measures were identified as effective for quelling violence. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that school authorities should provide proper counseling on conflict resolution skills, character development and anger management.*

**Keywords:** violence, adolescent, emotional adjustment, tertiary institutions.

## **Introduction**

The world is made up of people with different ideologies, values and aspirations. No man can live in isolation. He/she need others for successful living here on earth. In order words, interpersonal relationship is inevitable. Because of mans nature of imperfection, conflict is unavoidable in any relationship. In fact absence of conflict in any human relationship would be more suggestive of a dysfunction rather than sound function. There is bound to be agreements and disagreements and unresolved disagreement results to conflict. When conflict is not handled maturely, properly and with divine wisdom, it graduates to violence.

One's perception is a major determinant of the person's behaviour. Consequently, where wrong perception exist and subsequently become expressed in behaviors then conflicts which must invariably occur become difficult to resolve thus leading to violence. Violence is any behaviour that threatens or actually harms or injures the individual or others or destroys property. Violence often begins with verbal threats but overtime escalates to involve physical harm. World Health Organization (WHO) in its 2002 world report on violence and health proposes a definition of violence by saying that it is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual against oneself, another person or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation.

Violence is a global phenomenon resulting in the deaths of more than 1.6million people each year, making it one of the leading causes of death worldwide. Violence has become increasingly interpersonal and tied in with criminal activity, particularly in urban areas. Violence is exertion of physical force so as to kill, injure or abuse such as murder or forceful human destruction of property or injury to persons or animals usually intentional. Forceful, verbal and emotional abuse can harm others (saferspaces.org.za).

Violence is one of the social problems that seem to be rampant among adolescents in tertiary institutions in Anambra state. Most of the university students are in their late adolescence period and early adulthood period- a period when they are filled with life and energy. At that period, they are yet to develop proper self identity and many draw their identity from peer group perceived "tough guys" criterion , as they seem to be doing presently and often more exert their physical energy in violence at the slightest provocation. Hajian, Khirkhah and Habibi (2011) agree with the above by saying that adolescents are the main group exposed to the risk for behavioural misconduct. Hajian etal noted that these risky behaviours have led to the

increasing rate of early death, disability and chronic diseases as well as poor academic performance.

Adolescence is a transitional stage of physical and psychological development that generally occurs during the period from puberty to legal adulthood (Mawson, Beckwith, Dingle & Lubman, 2015). Adolescent is a critical time-periods in human development as many harmful and often-times lifelong behaviours stem from them. Adolescent is accompanied by many physiological and physical changes, and is also a stage of complex psychological maturation and development (Merikangas & McClair, 2012).

Adolescence is marked by increase in autonomy and time spent away from families relationships with caregivers remain an important developmental influence throughout this period. Adolescent violence involves behaviors ranging from physical fighting to more severe forms of physical assault that can result in serious injury or death. Review of related literatures shows that involvement in violence varies by gender and to a large extent by race. Adolescent males are more likely to be victims and perpetrators of violence than their female counterparts.

Violence among adolescents in tertiary institutions in Anambra state ranges from various forms like physical, psychological, sexual abuse and gender discrimination among others. Violence among adolescents in higher institutions is of public health importance as opined by Afolabi and Deji (2014) that it threatens global development, because of its social, economic, political and health implications on our society.

Violence results in adjustment problem disorders. Adjustment disorders are stress-related conditions. Psychologically, the adolescent experience more stress than would normally be expected in response to a stressful or unexpected event, and the stress causes significant problems in the adolescent's relationship and academics. This adjustment disorder, continue to have emotional and behavioural reactions that can contribute to feeling anxious and depressed.

Students violence appears to hinge heavily on psychological factors impinging on students: influence of one's peers( having delinquent peers), gang membership( secret cult gang), having a lack of attention or respect, having low self worth, experiencing abuse or neglect, witnessing violence in the home and/or being exposed to family or neighbourhood violence, access to weapons, history of early aggression in childhood, poor relations with parents, drug and alcohol use, poor school performance or academic failure, residing in a community with diminished economic opportunities.

Other psychological factors impinging on students which are crucial factors in violence are being the victim of bullying, genetic (family hereditary)

factors, exposure to violence in media. Causes of violence consist of the feelings that arise when one's pride, reputation, or self esteem is impinged by others.

Threats to self esteem set off feelings of anger and shame, and aggressive responses eg violence are likely to occur. Observation of students behaviors suggest that another psychological factor that can lead to students' violence is negative emotions such as anger or fear. For example, a person might become aggressive because they were enraged at another person, or they were afraid the other person might hurt them.

The researchers observed that violence in tertiary institutions is growing at an alarming proportions and this scenario has been a major concern to stakeholders about safety in our schools and the future of learning outcomes. Without adequate and proper counseling on conflict resolution skills ( knowing that conflict constitute the bed-rock for violence) , character development and anger management, the students are bound to continue engaging in violence.

Many studies have examined prevalence and influence of violence on learning ( Enyinnaya, 2015; Olujuwon, 2007; Afolabi, 2015) but none considered the psychological factors impinging on students' which are crucial factors in violence, the influence of violence on emotional adjustment of students' as well as psychological measures that could be effective in quelling students' violence which this study sought to determine.

Research has consistently shown that adolescents engage in detrimental and health threatening behaviours which inevitably influence their psychological wellbeing. Adolescents in tertiary institutions should as priority actively engage in academic activities, form good study habits and develop good interpersonal relationship to enable them prepare for life outside the world. The reverse is the case as most adolescents engage/participate in multiple novel and potentially risky behaviours ranging from sexual immorality, addiction, revolt, violence among others. Adolescence violence in tertiary institutions in Anambra state infringe the fundamental right to education and unsafe learning environments reduce the quality of education for all learners. It has adverse impact on academic achievement and attainment on future education and employment prospects. Also the individual's psychological (all round well being) is affected. The aim of the study therefore is to investigate the psychological dimensions of violence and influences on emotional adjustment of adolescents in tertiary institutions in Anambra state. Three research questions and three null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study.

The following research questions and hypothesis guided the study

- What are the psychological factors implicated in students violence in tertiary institutions in Anambra state?
- What are the influences of violence on emotional adjustment of adolescents?
- What are the psychological measures considered effective in quelling students' violence?
- The opinions of staff and students on the psychological factors implicated in violence among adolescents in tertiary institutions do not differ significantly.
- There is no significant difference between the perceptions of staff and students on the influence of violence on emotional adjustment of adolescents.
- The perceptions of staff and students on psychological measures considered effective in quelling violence in tertiary institutions in Anambra state do not differ significantly.

### **Method**

This study utilized descriptive survey design. Nworgu (2015) noted that a descriptive survey aims at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. The research was conducted in Anambra state using all the nine (9) tertiary institutions. The population comprised all academic staff (from the rank of assistant lecturer to professors) from department of educational psychology and male adolescents in all the 9 tertiary institutions. Academic staffs in educational psychology department were considered appropriate because the study is based on their discipline and such are in better position to furnish the researchers with the right/correct information. Also male adolescents' were preferred because review of related literatures asserts that violence varies by gender and adolescent males are more likely to be victims and perpetrators of violence than are adolescent females. The sample of the study stood at 30 academic staff and 450 students given a total of 480 subjects. All the academic staff in the 9 institutions was used for the study. Then in selecting the students for the study, stratified random sampling procedure was used. This technique was employed to ensure a fairly equal representation of the variables for the study. The stratification was based on Federal Government, State Government and Private owned higher institutions in Anambra state. Then within each section, simple random sampling was used to select 150 students'. Three research questions guided the study. A researcher-developed instrument titled 'Psychological Dimensions of Violence

questionnaire (PDVQ) was used for data collection. The instrument has 3 sections. The respondents were required to indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement with the items. Three experts in the Department of Educational Foundations (2 in Educational Psychology and the other in Measurement and Evaluation) Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka validated the instrument. Using Cronbach alpha to determine the reliability of the instrument, 0.79 was obtained as the reliability coefficient. 3 trained research assistants were engaged for data collection. The research questions were answered using mean, while t-test was employed in testing the null hypotheses.

**Results**

Table 1 : Mean scores of the staff and students responses on psychological factors implicated in students’ violence.

S/N	ITEMS	STAFF X	SD	STUDENTS X	SD
1	Academic pressure	3.37	1.84	3.50	1.87
2	Frustration due to lack of ability for course being pursued resulting in learned helplessness.	3.24	1.80	2.58	1.87
3	Academic failure	2.50	1.58	2.17	1.47
4	Poor school performance	3.28	1.81	2.70	1.64
5	Low self worth/esteem	2.83	1.05	3.05	1.15
6	Insufficient parental supervision	3.50	1.87	2.98	1.73
7	Child abuse	3.47	1.86	3.23	1.80
8	Drug and alcohol abuse.	3.67	1.91	3.65	1.91
9	Peer influence/having delinquent peers.	3.20	1.79	3.10	1.76
10	Family background eg where parents display violent behaviour.	3.67	1.91	3.65	1.91
11	Poor parent/child relationship.	3.54	1.88	2.92	1.71
12	Poor emotional and cognitive development.	3.21	1.79	3.38	1.84
13	Personality problems eg inferiority complex.	3.05	1.75	3.14	1.77
14	Lack of personal and group counseling by qualified and proven personnel to help students develop proper self identity and focus.	3.33	1.83	3.09	1.76
15	Psychological deficiencies created by dysfunctional homes.	3.00	1.73	2.93	1.71
16	Poor parenting or discord amongst family members.	2.70	1.64	2.88	1.97
17	Unmet needs of students by school authorities.	3.35	1.83	3.14	1.77

18 Behavioral disorder eg lack of anger control.	3.17	1.78	3.55	1.80
19 Students exhibiting external locus of control.	2.77	1.66	2.59	1.61
20 Poor motivation to learning.	3.13	1.77	2.99	1.73

Result from table 1 above revealed through the mean score of 2.50 and above, the staff and students agreement that the following psychological factors were implicated in students' violence. These include: Academic pressure, frustration due to lack of ability for course pursued resulting in learned helplessness, low self worth, insufficient parental supervision, child abuse, peer influence/having delinquent peers, family background, poor parent-child relationship. Others are personality problems, lack of personal and group counseling by qualified and proven personnel to help students develop proper self identity and focus, psychological deficiencies created by dysfunctional homes, poor parenting and unmet needs of students by school authorities.

Table 2: Mean scores of the staff and students responses on the influence of violence on the emotional adjustment of adolescents.

S/N	ITEMS	STAFF X	SD	STUDENTS X	SD
1	Affect ones feeling and thought about oneself and the world.	3.35	1.83	2.87	1.69
2	Inability to trust.	3.20	1.79	3.65	1.91
3	Affects ones behaviour and actions.	3.43	1.85	3.50	1.87
4	Feeling sad, hopeless and not enjoying things you used to enjoy.	3.33	1.83	3.15	1.77
5	Frequent crying	3.27	1.81	3.80	1.95
6	Low self esteem.	3.06	1.75	2.50	1.58
7	Fear of intimacy.	3.35	1.83	3.20	1.79
8	Worrying eg feeling anxious, nervous, jittery or stressed out.	3.15	1.78	2.98	1.72
9	Trouble with sleeping.	3.08	1.75	2.80	1.67
10	Loneliness	3.50	1.87	3.25	1.80
11	Lack of appetite	3.26	1.80	2.73	1.63
12	Difficulty in concentration	3.23	1.79	3.02	1.74
13	Feeling overwhelmed.	2.87	1.69	2.59	1.61
14	Loss of hope in future.	3.50	1.87	3.02	1.74
15	Difficulty functioning in daily activities .	3.47	1.86	3.23	1.80
16	Withdrawal from social supports.	3.67	1.91	3.65	1.91
17	Suicidal thoughts or behaviour.	3.00	1.73	2.93	1.71

18 Often depressed.	3.33	1.83	3.09	1.76
19 Regret ie lives in regret/flash back.	2.84	1.69	3.50	1.87
20 Withdrawn.	2.70	1.64	2.88	1.97

Table two shows the mean responses of staff and students on the influence of violence on the emotional adjustment of adolescents in tertiary institutions in Anambra state. 10 items has a mean score of 2.50 and above indicating the respondents agreement. They include: Affects ones feeling and thought about oneself and the world, affects ones behaviour and actions, inability to trust, feeling sad, hopeless and not enjoying things you used to enjoy, frequent crying, low self esteem, fear of intimacy, worrying eg feeling anxious, nervous, jittering or stressed out, trouble with sleeping, lack of appetite, loss of hope in future. Others include: feeling overwhelmed, difficulty functioning in daily life, withdrawal from social supports, suicidal thoughts or behaviors, often depressed and regret/flashbacks.

Table 3: Mean scores of staff and students on the psychological measures considered effective in quelling violence.

S/N	ITEMS	STAFF X	SD	STUDENTS X	SD
1.	University authorities/lecturers should focus on learning goals instead of performance goals to help reduce learned helplessness.	3.21	1.79	3.38	1.84
2.	Adequate and proper child rearing/ parenting.	3.06	1.75	2.50	1.58
3.	University authorities should provide proper counseling on conflict resolution skills, character development and anger management	3.40	1.84	3.00	1.73
4.	Parents should lay good behavioural standard for their children.	3.28	1.81	2.70	1.64
5.	Parents proper monitoring of the association that children keeps.	2.80	1.97	2.62	1.62
6.	Develop positive self esteem. Practical GS courses aimed at equipping students with communication skills, goal setting, conflict resolution should be introduced in tertiary institutions to enable students manage anger and conflict which is often are bedrock to violence.	2.50 3.24	1.58 1.80	2.62 2.58	1.62 1.87
7.	Services of qualified and proven guidance personnel should be employed consistently in higher institutions to help students develop proper self identity as well as have proper focus.	3.37	1.84	3.50	1.87

Results from table 3 show that the respondents (staff and students) with a mean score of 2.50 and above identified the following psychological measures as effective in quelling student's violence. They are: learning in tertiary institutions should emphasize learning goals instead of performance goals, adequate and proper child rearing/parenting, school authorities should provide proper counseling on conflict resolution skills, character development and anger management, parents should lay good behavioural standard for their children, parents proper monitoring of the association that children keeps, develop positive self esteem. Other psychological measures include: practical GS courses aimed at equipping students with communication skills, goal setting, conflict resolution should be introduced to enable students manage anger and conflict which are the bedrock of violence, services of qualified and proven guidance personnel should be employed consistently in higher institutions to help students develop proper self identity and have direction as well as focus.

Table 4: Summary of the t-test analysis on the staff and students perceptions on the psychological factors implicated in violence.

Source of variation	N	X	SD	Df	Cal.t	Crit.t	P<0.05
Staff	30	3.09	0.91	478	1.83	1.96	NS
Students	450	2.98	0.98				

From the result in table 4, null hypothesis 1 is accepted because calculated t which is 1.83 is less than crit.t of 1.96.

Table 5: Summary of the t-test analysis on the staff and students opinions on influence of violence on the emotional adjustment of adolescents.

Source of Variation	N	X	SD	Df	Cal.t	Crit.t	P<0.05
Staff	30	2.43	1.07	478	0.57	1.96	NS
Students	450	2.47	1.83				

The result in the above table shows that the crit.t of 1.96 is greater than the calculated t which is 0.57. Therefore, null hypothesis 2 is accepted.

**Table 6:** Summary of the t-test analysis on the staff and students perceptions on the psychological measures considered effective in quelling violence.

Source of variation	N	X	Sd	Df	Cal.t	Crit.t	P<0.05
Staff	30	2.63	1.01	478	0.46	1.96	NS
Students	450	2.66	1.07				

From table 6 above, null hypothesis 3 is accepted because the result revealed that calculated t of 0.46 is less than the crit.t of 1.96. Therefore, null hypothesis 3 is accepted.

### Discussion

Findings of the study identified the following to be among the psychological factors implicated in students' violence: academic pressure, frustration due to lack of ability for course being pursued, insufficient parental supervision, child abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, poor parent-child relationship, poor cognitive development, personality problems, poor parenting and unmet needs of students by school authorities.

The findings agrees with the findings of Ahmed and Mohammed (2015) which revealed that if a student is deprived of a good environment at his university place, then there are great chances of him becoming violent. Talking on family background, Ahmed etal assert that if students see their parents keep on fighting continuously for no reasons, beat each other, then they develop similar attitudes in mind and learn the same. Again, if a student is under depression, then there are also chances of him getting violent and he may showcase this violence in school.

Supporting the above findings, USA Constitutional Rights Foundation writing on parental influence as a factor implicated in students violence noted that although our culture expects the family to deal with the childhood problems, contemporary society makes it difficult for parents to meet all their children's needs. The current economy for example, often demands that both parents work, more children are raised by single parents including teenage mothers and some children are subjected by their parents to neglect physical, sexual and substance use. They emphasized that ideally, parents nurture and reinforce positive behaviors. When parents fail to do so, children may develop negative and often violent behavior patterns. In addition, neglectful or abusive family environments can inhibit the development of communication skills, self

esteem can be seriously damaged. In homes where positive behavior is not the norm, exposure to violence through popular culture may have a more profound impact.

Findings of the study revealed that violence has some influence on the emotional adjustment of the adolescent which include among others: affect ones feeling and thought about oneself and the world, affect ones behavior and actions, feeling sad, hopeless, and not enjoying things used to enjoy, frequent crying, feeling anxious, low self esteem, loneliness, feeling overwhelmed, withdrawal from social support, suicidal thoughts and flash backs. This findings aligns with that from [https://www.healthypeople.gov/topic\(2020\)](https://www.healthypeople.gov/topic(2020)) which showed that violence results in adjustment problem/disorder. The violent adolescent experience more stress than would normally be expected in response to a stressful or unexpected event and the stress causes significant problem in the adolescents relationship. They went further to say that the adjustment disorders continue to have emotional or behavioral reactions that can contribute to feeling anxious and depressed.

Findings of the study further showed that the following psychological measures could be effective in quelling student's violence. These include: Learning in tertiary institutions should emphasize learning goals instead of performance goals, adequate and proper child rearing/parenting, school authorities should provide proper counseling on conflict resolution skills, character development and anger management, parents proper monitoring of the association that children keeps, develop positive self esteem, practical GS course aimed at equipping students with communication skills, goal setting and conflict resolution should be introduced in tertiary institutions in Anambra state to enable students manage anger and resolve conflicts which are the bedrock to violence among others. The findings of the study corroborates with that of Kelly (2019) who emphasized teaching conflict and anger management skills. He advised the use of what he termed "teachable moments" to help teach conflict resolution. Kelly opined that if you have students disagreeing in the classroom, talk about ways that they can resolve their problems without resorting to violence. He suggests the use of debates to shape productive classroom discussions, practice the skills of speaking and listening in class so that students will be prepared to exercise their rights and accept the responsibilities of citizenship. Further, teach students ways to manage their anger through role plays, simulations and learning center activities. Teachers in every discipline should take the responsibility to share opinions and literature that will help build empathy.

The findings of this research work is in accord with that of Centers for Disease Control In <https://www.cdc.gov/pdf>schl---> who suggests what they

termed universal school based, parent and family based and finally, street outreach programs as measures of quelling students violence. They opined that universal school based programs can significantly lower rates of aggression and violent behavior. These programs are delivered to all students. They teach about various topics and develop skills, such as emotional self-awareness and control, positive social skills. Problem solving conflict resolution and team work. Parent and family-based programs can improve family relations and lower the risk for violence by adolescents especially when the programs are started early. These programs as they noted, will provide parents with education about child development and teach skills to communicate and solve problems in non-violent ways. Finally, street outreach programs can significantly reduce violence. These programs connect trained staff with at-risk youth to conduct conflict mediation, make service referrals and change beliefs about acceptability of violence.

### **Conclusion**

Violence remains one of the greatest public health threats to adolescents. Adolescents' exposure to violence may compromise healthy social relationships and academic potential. It is clear from the findings of this study that the psychological wounds of violence are devastating. The impact on the emotional adjustment of adolescents ranges from heightened fear, anxiety, depression, anger, posttraumatic stress, social withdrawal, the use of illicit drugs, alcohol dependence to suicidal ideation.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommend as follows:

1. Practical GS courses aimed at equipping students with communication skills, goal setting and conflict resolution should be introduced in tertiary institutions in Anambra state to enable students manage anger and resolve conflict which are the bedrock to violence.
2. Parents should lay good behavioral standard for their children and also properly monitor the association their child keeps. Adequate and proper child rearing/parenting should be the watchword. Parents are admonished to always remember the biblical injunction: "Spare the child and spoil the rod" and also "Train up the child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it".
3. Learning in tertiary institutions should emphasize learning goals instead of performance goals to avoid academic frustration, external locus of control and learned helplessness which are psychological factors implicated in students violence.

4. Students should develop positive self esteem through positive thoughts to avoid inferiority complex, low self esteem and other behavioral problems that can encourage violence.
5. School authorities should provide proper counseling on conflict resolution skills, character development and anger management.

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