



# Influence of Parents Physical Abuse on Emotional and Academic Adjustment of Secondary Schools Students in Ijumu Local Government Area of Kogi State Nigeria

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**Abstract:** The study investigates influence of parents' physical abuse on emotional and academic adjustment of secondary school students in Ijumu LGA of Kogi State, Nigeria. Correlational designed was used for the study. A sample of fifty one (51) abused students was drawn from two public schools. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated. Statistical means was used to answer the research questions and inferential statistics of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used in determining if or not a significant influence existed. Results showed that all the hypotheses 1 and 2 were rejected. Significant negative influence existed between parents physical abuse and emotional adjustment of students with ( $r = -0.567$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), parents' physical abuse and academic adjustment of students with ( $r = -0.769$ ,  $p = 0.030$ ). The results of the study indicated that parents' physical abuse has negative influence on emotional and academic adjustment of students' in Secondary Schools. It was therefore recommended that through Parent Teachers Association (PTA), school counselors should continuously sensitize parents on the need to desist from physical abuse because of the negative influence it has on the emotional well being of students. Non-Governmental Organizations should invigorate their efforts on massive campaign against physical abuse. This will make parents to understand the implication of physical assault on their children such as kicking, pushing and torturing, as this produces fearfulness, anxiety, low self-esteem and academic adjustment difficulties. The National and all states' Houses of Assembly should deem it fit to pass the Child Rights Act. Hence, this will give protection to young secondary school students against physical abuse by parents and improved their emotional and academic adjustment.

**Keywords:** Parents' Physical Abuse, Emotional Adjustment of Students, Academic, Adjustment of Students

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## 1. Introduction

Physical abuse is a hostile form of aggression whose aim is to cause bodily damage that includes kicking, molesting, harassing, biting, pushing, torturing, fighting, bullying, vandalism, destruction and gangsterrism, shoving, hair pulling, stabbing, shooting [8]. It has become an international menace that the World Health Organization defines it as the intentional use of physical force against an individual that results or has a high likelihood of resulting in harm for the individual health, survival, development or dignity [4]. Individual physical abuse may inevitably affect a victim's emotional and academic adjustment. For instance, Nor and Talaat (2012) [13] suggested that childhood physical abuse experiences may confer risk for internalizing disorders in part

because physical abuse influences maladjustment that could lead to the development of self-critical style. Therefore, adequate emotional and academic adjustment devoid of physical abuse, and the willingness to learn to meet the requirements of the environment are fundamental success in life.

When students are young, parents are most likely to be the abusers. Nevertheless, any family member can be physically abusive. Children who have difficulty in temperaments or disabilities, especially ones that make them challenging to care for are at higher risk of physical abuse [14]. A child who is physically abused may likely develop a low self-esteem and find it difficult to adjust emotionally and academically to life situation in the school. Also a child who is happy with an achievement but does not feel loved may eventually

experience emotional and academic adjustment difficulties. Likewise, a child who feels loved but is constantly physically abused and otherwise can also end up with emotional and academic adjustment problem. Thus, healthy self-concept and emotional adjustment results when the right balance is attained [15]. When considering symptoms of child abuse, expectation of recovery different aspects has to be taken into account. For example, emotional and academic adjustment problem created by physical abuse show lack of importance for the developmental stage that a child is in and its effects.

The emotional and academic adjustment problem created by physical abuse may affect students' poor academic performance. For instance, Kogi State Ministry of Education (2018) record reveals that about 75% of students from public secondary schools who sat for School Certificate Examination performed poorly compared to students from private schools (Kogi State Ministry of Education, 2018). This suggests that the emotional and academic adjustment of public secondary school students was poor. Therefore, this study will determine whether the poor performance and problem of emotional and academic adjustment of students is associated with physical abuses of parents and report appropriately.

## 2. Review of Related Studies

This issue of physical abuse review of related study brings together a number of papers focusing on different aspects of the physical abuse of children, including issues to do with professional assessment, young people's disclosure of physical abuse and a preventative measure for parents to help reduce non-accidental head injury in children. Physical abuse of children can involve kicking, molesting, harassing, biting, pushing, torturing, fighting, bullying, vandalism, destruction and gangsterism, shoving, hair pulling, stabbing, shooting, hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical abuse may also be caused when a parent or care-giver fabricates the symptoms or deliberately induces illness in a child' (Government cited in John & Peter, S. 2017) [6]. Physical abuse can result in serious long-term problems for children's social, emotional and physical development and at its most severe, results in serious injury or death.

In most Secondary Schools where physical abuse is persistently, it is aimed as a corrective measure to deter students from desisting from particular forms of unacceptable behaviours known to the students. It is usually in form of corporal punishment or any other activity that constitute bodily pain. Mfonobong (2016) defines corporal punishment as the use of physical force with the intention of causing bodily pain, but not injury for the purpose of correction or control. In many schools in the USA, corporal punishment has been declared illegal. Similarly in Nigeria corporal punishment has since been abolished in schools but outside the school area, it is being held in high esteem as a way of correcting and instilling discipline in young children. Its use

is predicated on cultural norms. It is at home as a form of approved for correcting children. Most at times the parents do this in anger and in the process the child is left injured and physically inflicted with bruises and pains.

Parents need to be sensitive to their children changing needs at different stages of development. They also need to be attentive to and perceptive of the cues provided by their child's behavior and learn to respond to those cues appropriately. Abusive parents tend to lack accurate knowledge about child rearing and have unrealistic expectations for their children's behavior [2]. They may have a tendency to view their child's behavior in a negative manner, and describe the children as purposefully disruptive, noncompliant and annoying [3]. Abusive parents may also view misbehaviour differently from non-abusive parents and therefore may not be reliable reporters of their own child's behavior.

McClowskey & Lichter (2003) [11], posit long term developmental problems for physical abuse children such as low self-esteem, depression, physical aggression and poor performance are also common with physically abused victims. It was also found that physically abused victims often displayed excessive uneasiness, anxiety, low self-esteem, aggression and other negative emotional problems [5]. Children whose care givers are unresponsive, neglectful or use excessive harsh physical punishment are less equipped to accomplish critical developmental task and more likely to develop perceptions of themselves as ineffective and unworthy [9]. It was noted by Van Loooveren (2017) [16] that if a lower cut-off score of 166 is used, then 25 per cent of families would be regarded as having a risk for physical abuse among children's population. However, it is interesting to note that the researchers found no correlation between an elevated risk for physical abuse and any particular child psychiatric diagnosis.

Many children who were physically abused early in life simply accept the blame and think that they are the problems such that they feel crazy, bad and worthless. They discredit their own reactions and feelings so that their perceptions match with what they think or feel. They often conclude that had they been better, smarter, or more obedient, their parents would have been more loving, supportive, or proud of them Uchenna (2014). Unfortunately, depression and low self-esteem are natural consequences of this process. Any form of physical abuse is detrimental to the self-concept development of children. It produces withdrawal syndrome, fearfulness, anxiety, low self-esteem and low self-worth.

Untreated adults that have been physically abused as children may display variety of symptoms taking different expressions. Lindell (2004) [10] observed psychiatric illness like drug and substance abuse, criminality, poor social skills and low ambitions in life are conditions that often exposed someone to physical abuse. He further said that mental health treatment has been shown to help mitigate symptoms and adjust to social life, although about one third of adults who have been physically abused in childhood, abuse their children in turn.

Thus, Agnew cited in Mfonobong (2016) [1] advised against the use of physical punishment on children as it may lead to physical abuse which in turn may constitute academic adjustment difficulties. Subsequently, it can lead the children to commit delinquent act such as truancy. In recent times, the use of more positive forms of behavior modification is advocated such as persuasion, appeal to reason and good judgment plus the reward for desirable forms of behaviour. In addition, there is also the belief that there should be unconditional acceptance and regard for the learner. In addition, there can be recognition that the child is worthy and should not be treated as an animal but a human being with feelings. It is believed that if these strategies are used, children will be willing to adjust, attend and engage actively in school activities and programs.

However, the onus is on all of us as professionals, to ensure that we have the knowledge and skills to recognize all forms of physical abuse by parents and to robustly assess concerns of the maltreatment along with attitudes that encourage children and young people to feel safe and adjust emotionally and academically while at home and in school, and to be able to disclose abuse when they are experiencing it as well as respond to abuse when it does come to light. Much more needs to be done to support parents in appropriate, non - abusive ways of parenting. It is in this light that this study sets to explore influence of parents physical abuse on emotional and academic adjustment of secondary schools students in Ijumu Local Government area of Kogi State, Nigeria.

### 3. Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

What is the influence of parents’ physical abuse on emotional adjustment of Secondary School Students in Kogi State, Nigeria?

What is the influence of parents’ physical abuse on academic adjustment of Secondary School Students in Kogi State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were stated for this study:

Hypotheses One: There is no significant influence between Parents Physical Abuse and Emotional Adjustment of Secondary School Students in Ijumu LGA, Kogi State.

Hypotheses Two: There is no significant influence between Parents Physical Abuse and Academic Adjustment of Secondary School Students in Ijumu LGA, Kogi State.

### 4. Methodology

The study employed correlational research design to gather data on parents’ physical abuse, emotional adjustment and academic adjustment of secondary school students. The population of the two selected schools in Ijumu Local Government Area was 305 students. Comprehensive High School Aiyetoro (CHS) with had 169 students while Comprehensive High School (CHS), Iyara had 136 students. Consequently a purposive sampling technique was used to select 51 secondary school students from both schools. This comprised of 35 students from CHS Aiyetoro and 16 students from CHS Iyara. The researchers made use of three instruments tagged; Physical Abuse Questionnaire (PAQ) for section A, Emotional Adjustment Questionnaire (EAQ) for section B, and Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (AAQ) for section C. The instruments were validated by three experts, one each from psychology, counseling, and measurement and evaluation. Their contributions led to the dropping and addition of some items. Also a pilot study was conducted to determine the validity and reliability of the instrument, with 20 students of both JSS 2 and SS 2 students of public secondary school in Kogi State. The students did not comprise those that were used for the main studies. Cronbach alpha was used in the analyses which yielded the coefficient alpha for the three sections of 0.77, 0.79 and 0.85 respectively. The services of research assistants were employed in collecting the data which was done through direct delivery approach. The data collected were collated and analysed, using PPMC to test the hypotheses.

Answering research questions:

Question One: what is the influence of Parents Physical Abuse on Emotional Adjustment of Secondary School Students in Ijumu LGA, Kogi State?

*Table 1. Influence of Parents’ Physical Abuse on Emotional Adjustment of Students.*

Variables	N	Mean	Std	df	Correlation index r	Remarks
Parents Physical Abuse	51	25.9216	9.36983	49	-0.567**	Negative influence btw PA and EA
Students Emotional Adjustment	51	39.7255	15.31676			

Results of the correlation statistics revealed negative influence between Physical Abuse and Emotional Adjustment at a correlation index of -0.567 The influence is inverse. That is the higher the parental physical abuse, the lower the

emotional adjustment and vice versa.

Question Two: what is the influence of parent’s physical abuse and academic adjustment of Secondary School Students in Ijumu LGA, Kogi State?

*Table 2. Correlation statistics on the influence between Parents’ Physical Abuse and Academic Adjustment of Students in Secondary School.*

Variables	N	Mean	Std	df	Correlation index r	Rmaks
Parents Physical Abuse	51	25.9216	9.36983	49	-0.769**	Negative influence btw PA and AA
Students Academic Adjustment	51	62.5686	14.87717			

Results of the correlation statistics revealed negative

influence between parents’ physical abuse and academic

adjustment at a correlation index level of -0.769. The relationship is inverse. That is, the higher the parental physical abuse, the lower the academic adjustment and vice versa.

**Table 3.** Pearson Product Moment Correlation (*r*) statistics on the influence between Parents' Physical Abuse on Emotional Adjustment of Students in Secondary School.

Variables	N	Mean	Std	df	Correlation index r	P
Parents Physical Abuse	51	25.9216	9.36983	49	-0.567**	0.000
Students Emotional Adjustment	51	39.7255	15.31676			

p calculated < 0.05, absolute value of correlation index > r critical at df 49.

Results of the PPMC statistics revealed significant influence of physical abuse and emotional adjustment. Reasons being that the calculated p value of 0.000 is lower than the 0.05 alpha level and the computed correlation index value of 0.567 is higher than the 0.229 critical r at df 49. The influence is inverse. That is the higher the parental physical abuse, the lower the emotional adjustment and vice versa.

**Table 4.** Pearson Product Moment Correlation (*r*) statistics on the influence between Parents' Physical Abuse and Academic Adjustment of Students in Secondary School.

Variables	N	Mean	Std	df	Correlation index r	P
Parents Physical Abuse	51	25.9216	9.36983	49	-0.769**	0.030
Students' Academic Adjustment	51	62.5686	14.87717			

p calculated < 0.05, absolute value of correlation index > r critical at df 49.

Results of the PPMC statistics revealed significant influence between Parents physical abuse and Academic Adjustment. Reasons being that the calculated p value of 0.030 is lower than the 0.05 alpha level and the computed correlation index value of 0.769 is higher than the 0.229 critical r at df 49. The relationship is inverse. That is the higher the parental physical abuse, the lower the Academic adjustment and vice versa. Therefore the null hypotheses which state that there is no significant influence between parent physical abuse and Academic adjustment among secondary school students in Ijumu Local government area of Kogi state is hereby rejected.

## 5. Discussion

The findings reveal that significant negative influence exist between parents' physical abuse and students' emotional adjustment in Ijumu LGA, Kogi State, which is an indication that the higher the Physical Abuse the lower the Emotional Adjustment and vice versa. This was in line with the work of Sullivan and Knutson, 2000 who assert that children are most vulnerable to physical abuse in the first three years of life, but it can occur at any time even at secondary school level. When children are young, mothers are most likely to be the abusers. But any family member can be abusive as well. Children who have difficulty in temperaments or disabilities, especially ones that make them challenging to care for are at higher risk of physical abuse. Physical abuse is one form of abuses that persistently occurs especially in the form of correction or corporal punishment in most secondary schools

## Hypotheses testing

Hypotheses One: There is no significant influence between Parents Physical Abuse and Emotional Adjustment of Secondary School Students in Ijumu LGA, Kogi State.

Therefore the null hypotheses which state that there is no significant influence between parent physical abuse and emotional adjustment among secondary school students in Ijumu LGA of Kogi state is hereby rejected.

Hypotheses Two: There is no significant influence between Parents Physical Abuse and Academic Adjustment of Secondary School Students in Ijumu LGA, Kogi State.

and it has negatively affected most children emotional adjustment.

The second finding indicates a significant negative influence exist between Parents Physical Abuse and Academic Adjustment of Secondary School Students in Ijumu LGA, Kogi State. It is an indication that the higher the physical abuse the lower the Academic Adjustment and vice versa. This was in confirmation of Kim and Cicchetti (2011), in his analysis of the effect of students' abuse opined that students' maltreatment and adverse parent practices have the potential to delay the academic performance resulting from academic adjustment difficulties facing the students, hence putting them at risk for the loss of government funding which also affect economic outcomes in adulthood. Students in all sorts of deviant behaviour and most students become criminals later in life due to their abusive upbringing and not being able to acquire quality education which is a scenario in most African countries and Nigeria is not left out of the scene. Agnew in Mfonobong (2016) [12], however, advised against the use of physical punishment on students as it may lead to physical abuse which in turn may lead to emotional and academic adjustment difficulties and subsequently committing delinquent act such as truancy and abandonment of school.

## 6. Conclusion

The outcome indicate that physical abuse by parents on students in secondary schools is a serious impediment to academic performance of students. It is a problem that affects not only the students' emotional and academic adjustment but

the public at large that witness it. This is because the result obtained has confirmed that significant negative influence exists between parents' physical abuse and emotional adjustment as well as academic adjustment of students in secondary school.

## 7. Recommendation

1. Through Parent Teachers Association (PTA), school counselors should continuously sensitize parents on the need to desist from physical abuse because of the negative influence it has on the emotional adjustment of students.
2. Non-Governmental Organizations should invigorate their efforts on massive campaign against physical abuse. This will make parents to understand the implication of physical assault on their children such as kicking, pushing and torturing, as this produces fearfulness, anxiety, low self-esteem and academic adjustment difficulties.
3. The National and all states' Houses of Assembly should deem it fit to pass the Child Rights Act. Hence, this will give protection to young secondary school students against physical abuse by parents and improved their emotional and academic adjustment.

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