

EFFECTIVENESS OF PARENTING EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN REDUCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG PARENTS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OJO AREA OF LAGOS STATE

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Abstract

Domestic violence among couples is a pervasive issue that affects individuals, families, and society as a whole. It encompasses physical, emotional, psychological, and financial abuse, creating long-term adverse effects on victims and their dependents. The consequences of domestic violence extend beyond the couple involved, often influencing children who witness such abuse. Exposure to domestic violence can shape a child's behaviour, emotional well-being, and perception of relationships, potentially leading to a cycle of violence across generations. Domestic violence among parents of secondary school students presents significant social and psychological challenges, impacting both parents and their children. This study examines the effectiveness of parenting education programs in reducing instances of domestic violence among this demographic. This study adopted a quantitative research design and purposive sampling technique to survey 63 parents who participated in a structured parenting education programme across several secondary schools. Data was collected through a post-intervention questionnaire entitled "Parenting education and domestic violence", measuring changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours related to domestic violence. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse and test the hypothesis formulated using an independent t-test. It was found that the parenting education was effective, as the participants reported an improved spousal relationship. Recommendations were made based on the findings.

Keywords: parenting education, domestic violence, students, secondary school

Introduction

Domestic violence among couples is a pervasive issue that affects individuals, families, and society as a whole. It encompasses physical, emotional, psychological, and financial abuse, creating long-term adverse effects on victims and their dependents. The consequences of domestic violence extend beyond the couple involved, often influencing children who witness such abuse. Exposure to domestic violence can shape a child’s behaviour, emotional well-being, and perception of relationships, potentially leading to a cycle of violence across generations. Domestic violence remains a critical social issue in Nigeria, affecting individuals and families across various socioeconomic groups. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), domestic violence, particularly intimate partner violence, is prevalent in many African countries, including Nigeria, and poses significant health risks to victims, particularly women and children (WHO, 2024). In Lagos State, Nigeria’s largest urban centre, domestic violence continues to be a significant concern, with reports indicating an increase in the incidence of abuse within households (Oluwole et al., 2020). The negative impacts of domestic violence extend beyond the immediate physical harm to victims, influencing children's emotional, cognitive, and behavioural development, especially among secondary school students who are in a critical stage of development (Usman, 2021).

Parenting education programmes have been identified as a potential solution to mitigate the occurrence of domestic violence. These programmes focus on improving parents' knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward non-violent parenting and conflict resolution (Garzón Segura & Carcedo González, 2020). Studies have shown that effective parenting education can significantly reduce domestic violence by fostering healthier family dynamics and improving parents' ability to manage stress and resolve conflicts constructively (Holt et al., 2008). In the context of Lagos State, where socioeconomic pressures are often high, and parents may struggle with economic and emotional challenges, the need for structured support in parenting is essential (Nnama-Okechukwu & Eghosa, 2021).

The Nigerian government and non-governmental organisations have implemented various parenting education initiatives to address domestic violence, but the effectiveness of these programmes remains under-researched (Iroque, 2020). Evaluating the effectiveness of such initiatives, particularly in densely populated urban areas like Lagos, is essential to ensure that these interventions are impactful and scalable. This study seeks to examine the effectiveness of parenting education programmes in reducing domestic violence among parents of secondary school students in Lagos State. By assessing the impact of these interventions on parents' attitudes and behaviours, this research will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on domestic violence prevention and family welfare enhancement in Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to:

1. Assess the effectiveness of parenting education programmes on the incidence of domestic

violence among parents of secondary school students in Lagos State, Nigeria.

2. Determine the effect of parenting education programmes on parents' communication, conflict resolution, and stress management skills.
3. Determine the differences in the effectiveness of parenting education programs based on demographic factors of respondents such as gender, age, education level, and socio-economic status.

Research Questions

1. How effective are parenting education programmes on the incidence of domestic violence among parents of secondary school students in Lagos State, Nigeria?
2. Do parenting education programmes have effect on parents' communication, conflict resolution, and stress management skills?
3. What are the differences in the effectiveness of parenting education programmes based on demographic factors such as gender, age, education level, and socio-economic status?

Hypothesis

H01: The effectiveness of parenting education programmes in reducing domestic violence varies significantly based on gender.

Effect of Parental Domestic Violence on Children's Academic Performance

The effect of domestic violence on children extends beyond the home environment, significantly affecting their academic performance and overall well-being. Studies have shown that children exposed to domestic violence often experience emotional, psychological, and cognitive challenges that hinder their ability to perform well in school (Doroudchi et al., 2023). Children living in violent households often display heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and behavioural problems, all of which can interfere with their focus, motivation, and engagement in academic activities (Downey & Crummy, 2022).

One of the key effects of exposure to domestic violence is the disruption of a child's cognitive development. Children who witness or experience violence in their homes are often distracted in school, have difficulty concentrating, and may suffer from memory problems (Siegel, 2021). These cognitive disruptions lead to lower academic achievement, as they hinder the child's ability to absorb and retain information, complete tasks, and perform well in assessments. Research conducted by Hamby et al. (2020) highlights that children in homes affected by domestic violence often lag behind their peers in reading, mathematics, and overall school performance, which can have long-term consequences on their educational attainment.

Furthermore, children who experience domestic violence at home are more likely to exhibit behavioural problems such as aggression or withdrawal, which can lead to disciplinary issues at school. These behavioural problems often result in frequent absences from school, suspensions, or expulsions, further hindering their academic progress (Holt et al., 2008).

Teachers and school administrators may struggle to address these behavioural issues effectively, as they are often unaware of the underlying domestic problems affecting the child (Mogbeyiteren & Abina, 2021). As a result, these children become further isolated from academic and social opportunities, compounding their educational disadvantages.

The emotional toll of living in a violent household also manifests in the form of low self-esteem and feelings of helplessness among children, which directly impacts their academic engagement. Children exposed to domestic violence often believe they are incapable of achieving success, leading to decreased participation in classroom activities, lower aspirations, and a lack of perseverance in academic pursuits (Lloyd, 2018). This emotional distress negatively affects their academic performance, as they may feel disconnected from their school environment and lack the support they need to succeed.

In Nigeria, the prevalence of domestic violence and its impact on children's education is a growing concern, particularly in urban areas like Lagos. A study by Adeniyi et al. (2023) revealed that children who experience domestic violence at home in Lagos are more likely to experience school dropout, low academic achievement, and emotional trauma. The researchers emphasised the importance of intervention programmes, including counselling and parental education, to mitigate these adverse effects and support children's academic development in such households.

The cumulative effect of domestic violence on children's academic performance is clearly apparent: it creates an unstable and unsafe environment that impairs their ability to focus on learning, leading to poor educational outcomes. Interventions aimed at addressing domestic violence, such as parental education programs and school-based counselling, are critical for supporting these children and improving their academic trajectories (Barrett et al., 2024).

Counselling Education Interventions for Parents in Reducing Domestic Violence

Counselling education interventions have gained recognition as effective tools in reducing domestic violence among parents. These interventions aim to equip parents with skills for conflict resolution, emotional regulation, and improved communication, which are crucial in breaking the cycle of violence in households. Research has demonstrated that when parents receive proper counselling and education, it can significantly mitigate violent behaviours and promote healthier family dynamics (Backhaus et al., 2024; Jahanfar, S. et al., 2014).

A critical element of these interventions is their focus on addressing the root causes of domestic violence, such as anger management issues, substance abuse, and lack of communication skills. Studies indicate that when parents are provided with strategies to manage stress and resolve conflicts non-violently, there is a significant reduction in the instances of physical and emotional abuse within the household. As Jackson et al. (2020) point out that counselling education that includes cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) has been effective in helping parents identify and alter the negative thought patterns that often lead to violent outbursts.

Parenting education programmes are crucial in teaching parents how to nurture and maintain healthy relationships with their partners and children. According to a study by Lee et al. (2020), these programs often incorporate training in positive discipline, emotional intelligence, and communication techniques. These skills are designed to reduce stress in the household and provide alternatives to violence when managing conflict. Moreover, Lee and colleagues highlight that parents who undergo these educational interventions report improved family cohesion and lower rates of conflict escalation.

Group counselling programs, such as those implemented in community centres or schools, have also proven effective in reducing domestic violence among parents. These programs create a supportive environment where parents can share their experiences, learn from others, and receive guidance from trained counsellors. Peer support is a significant aspect of group interventions, helping to reduce feelings of isolation and encouraging behavioural changes. Research by Garcia et al. (2021) demonstrated that parents who participated in group counselling sessions were more likely to adopt non-violent conflict resolution strategies, leading to a decrease in domestic violence incidents.

Another significant factor in the effectiveness of counselling education interventions is the incorporation of culturally sensitive approaches. Particularly in diverse communities, such as those in Nigeria, it is essential to tailor interventions to respect cultural norms and values while promoting non-violent behaviours. A study Wagwula et al. (2024) found that culturally tailored counselling programs that consider the socio-economic and religious contexts of the participants were more successful in reducing domestic violence than those using a one-size-fits-all approach.

Additionally, prevention-focused counselling interventions for parents (Macdonald et al., 2016) have been shown to have long-term positive effects on reducing domestic violence. These programmes often emphasise the importance of early intervention, educating parents on the risks and signs of domestic violence before it escalates. Proactive counselling interventions can disrupt cycles of abuse early on, preventing violence from becoming entrenched in the family dynamics (Allen et al., 2022).

Furthermore, integrating counselling with other forms of support, such as legal and financial aid, can enhance the overall effectiveness of these interventions. Parents dealing with domestic violence often face multiple challenges, including financial instability and legal issues. Comprehensive programmes that address these issues alongside counselling have been found to be more successful in helping families overcome domestic violence (Allen et al., 2022).

In conclusion, counselling education interventions are essential in reducing domestic violence among parents. By providing parents with the tools to manage stress, resolve conflicts non-violently, and foster positive relationships, these interventions contribute significantly to creating safer family environments. However, for these programs to be fully effective, they

must be culturally sensitive and comprehensive, addressing the broader socio-economic challenges that parents may face.

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research design of cross-sectional type to assess the effectiveness of parenting education programmes in reducing domestic violence among parents of secondary school students. The target population of the study are parents of secondary school students who underwent parenting education counselling in Ojo Local Government Area of Lagos.

Therefore, the sample of this study comprised 63 parents of secondary school students who have attended a parenting education counselling programme. The sample was purposively determined. The choice of purposive sampling technique is to be able to select only the most qualified participants. A Researchers-designed questionnaire entitled “Parenting education and domestic violence” was used to elicit information from the participants. Part A of the questionnaire sought the participants' demographic information, including gender, age and education level. Part B contains items about the effectiveness of parenting programmes. A four-point Likert scale response option was employed.

The instrument was subjected to content and construct validity by seeking expert review to assess the questionnaire items' relevance, clarity, and coverage. At the same time, the Cronbach alpha reliability method was employed to determine the instrument's reliability. A coefficient of 0.72 was obtained, which suggests that the instrument will be consistently relevant.

The instrument was administered to the participants within two months (July and August 2024). Only 63 of the participants who participated responded to the instrument. The collected data was cleansed, coded, and input into the SPSS version 29 for further analysis. The research questions were answered descriptively using frequency count, percentage and mean score. Meanwhile, an independent t-test was used to test the hypothesis at a 0.05 significance level.

The ethical issues were also addressed. The participant's consent was sought before participating in this study. They were duly informed of the purpose of the study and assured of their anonymity and confidentiality. The identity of the individual participants was hidden from the public.

Results

The analysis was based on the responses. Out of 100 sampled participants, only 63 returned and were usable.

Table 1: Participants Demographic Profile

| Variable | Category | N | % |
|-----------|--------------------|----|-------|
| Gender | Male | 22 | 34.9% |
| | Female | 41 | 65.1% |
| Age | 18-25 Years | 2 | 3.2% |
| | 26-35 Years | 4 | 6.3% |
| | 36-45 Years | 24 | 38.1% |
| | 46-55 Years | 21 | 33.3% |
| | 56 Years and above | 12 | 19.0% |
| Education | Primary | 0 | 0% |
| | Secondary | 15 | 23.8% |
| | Higher Education | 48 | 76.2% |
| Total | | 63 | 100% |

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the participants (N = 63) involved in the study. The majority of the participants were female (65.1%), while 34.9% were male. Regarding the age distribution, the largest group of participants (38.1%) were 36-45 years old, followed by those aged 46-55 (33.3%). A smaller proportion of participants fell into the 56 years and above category (19.0%), with only 6.3% being between 26-35 years and 3.2% aged 18-25 years.

Regarding education, most participants (76.2%) had attained higher education, while 23.8% had completed secondary education. No participants reported having only a primary education.

Research Question One: How effective are parenting education programmes on the incidence of domestic violence among parents of secondary school students in Lagos State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Effectiveness of parenting education programs on the incidence of domestic violence among parents of secondary school students in Lagos State, Nigeria

| | Yes | % | No | % | Remark |
|---|-----|------|----|------|-----------|
| There has been a significant decrease in physical violence in my home after attending the parenting education program | 50 | 78.3 | 13 | 12.6 | Effective |
| I feel that conflicts in my home are more constructive after the program. | 56 | 88.8 | 7 | 11.2 | Effective |
| The program helped reduce my use of aggressive behaviour during conflicts. | 60 | 95.2 | 3 | 4.8 | Effective |

The results presented in Table 2 demonstrate a significant positive effect of parenting education programmes on reducing domestic violence among parents of secondary school students in Lagos State, Nigeria. Notably, 78.3% of respondents reported a substantial decrease in physical violence in their homes after attending the program, while only 12.6% did not observe such a reduction. This suggests that the programme effectively curbs physical violence in households. Additionally, 88.8% of participants felt that conflicts in their homes became more constructive following the program, compared to 11.2% who disagreed. This indicates that the program plays a crucial role in fostering healthier, more productive conflict resolution.

Moreover, 95.2% of respondents acknowledged that the programmes helped reduce their use of aggressive behaviour during conflicts, with only 4.8% disagreeing. These findings strongly suggest that parenting education programs are highly effective in addressing domestic violence and promoting more constructive conflict management strategies in households.

Research Question Two: What is the effect of parenting education programmes on parents' communication, conflict resolution, and stress management skills?

Table 3: Effectiveness of parenting education communication, conflict resolution, and stress management skills

| S/n | communication, conflict resolution, and stress management skills | Mean | Remark |
|-----|--|------|-----------|
| 1 | Calm communication | 3.38 | Effective |
| 2 | Confidence in conflict resolution strategies | 3.32 | Effective |
| 3 | Peaceful conflict resolution | 3.46 | Effective |
| 4 | Listening to the partner's perspective | 3.32 | Effective |
| 5 | Temper control | 3.41 | Effective |

The effectiveness of the parenting education programmes in terms of communication, conflict resolution, and stress management skills was evaluated through participants' self-

reports. Participants indicated an improved ability to communicate more calmly with their partners during disagreements ($M = 3.38$) and reported confidence in using conflict resolution strategies taught in the programmes ($M = 3.32$). The programmes were perceived as highly effective in enhancing peaceful conflict resolution ($M = 3.46$), promoting openness to listening to partners during arguments ($M = 3.32$) and improving temper control ($M = 3.41$). These results suggest that the parenting education programmes positively impacted essential interpersonal skills.

H01: There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of parenting education programmes in reducing domestic violence based on gender.

Table 4: Effectiveness of parenting education programmes in reducing domestic violence based on gender.

| Gender | N | Mean | Std. | D | P | t | df | F | Cohens' D |
|--------|----|------|------|-------|---|------|----|-------|-----------|
| Male | 22 | 2.65 | .390 | | | | | | |
| | | | | 0.261 | 1 | .134 | 61 | 0.814 | 0.3 |
| Female | 41 | 2.52 | .447 | | | | | | |

Table 4 examined the effectiveness of parenting education programmes in reducing domestic violence based on gender. Males reported a slightly higher mean effectiveness ($M = 2.65$, $SD = 0.390$) compared to females ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 0.447$). However, this difference was not statistically significant, $t(61) = 1.134$, $p = 0.261$, indicating that both genders perceived the program's effectiveness similarly. The small effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.3$) suggests that although males rated the programme slightly higher in terms of effectiveness, the practical significance of this difference is minor. Therefore, the parenting education programmes were perceived to be equally effective across genders in reducing domestic violence.

The study also revealed that no significant differences existed in the effectiveness of parenting education programmes in reducing domestic violence based on gender of the spouses.

Discussion

This study examined the effectiveness of parenting education programmes in reducing domestic violence among parents of secondary school students in Lagos state, Nigeria. The first objective revealed that the effectiveness of parenting education programmes on the incidence of domestic violence among parents of secondary school students in Lagos State, Nigeria, was found to be effective. This result highlights the critical role that structured interventions play in promoting healthier family environments. The effectiveness of these programs can be attributed to how they equip parents with the necessary skills to manage conflicts constructively, communicate more effectively, and control emotional responses during stressful situations. This finding is consistent with the broader literature on the subject. For instance, Sanders et al.

(2014) emphasise that parenting education programmes are instrumental in reducing domestic violence by improving parenting practices, which in turn foster more peaceful household dynamics. Such programs are known to create an awareness of non-violent communication, helping parents avoid escalating tensions that could lead to physical or emotional abuse. As noted by Semahegn et al. (2017), these programs also focus on reshaping attitudes toward discipline and conflict resolution, which are often at the core of domestic violence incidents.

Furthermore, a parenting programme was found to have effectively improved spousal communication skills. Effective communication serves as a critical component in fostering understanding and reducing conflict between partners. This aligns with Nwaoba and Queen (2022) who found that positive communication skills create peaceful and harmonious living among spouses in their marital relationship. Additionally, the effectiveness of parenting education programmes in reducing domestic violence may also stem from their ability to change ingrained social and cultural norms that tolerate or normalise violence within the household. By introducing alternative, non-violent disciplinary strategies, these programs help shift attitudes and behaviours, promoting healthier relationship dynamics. Moreover, the support networks formed through these programmes provide parents with a sense of community and shared experience, which can reduce stress and offer practical strategies for resolving disputes peacefully.

Another possible explanation for the success of these programs is their ability to increase parents' emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence allows individuals to recognise, understand, and manage their emotions more effectively, which can significantly reduce impulsive reactions that lead to violent confrontations. Research by Bradberry and Greaves (2019) suggests that individuals with higher emotional intelligence are less likely to engage in aggressive behaviours and more likely to employ constructive conflict resolution strategies.

The confidence in using conflict resolution strategies and the ability to resolve conflicts peacefully further support the programme's effectiveness. These results align with the findings of (Fox et al., 2016; Hameeda Narejo et al., 2023), who reported that structured parenting programmes improved conflict resolution skills and reduced aggressive responses in family settings. Similarly, Umennuihe et al. (2023) highlighted that those participants who completed such programmes showed enhanced conflict management strategies, which resulted in more harmonious relationships.

The study also revealed that no significant differences existed in the effectiveness of parenting education programmes in reducing domestic violence based on the gender of the spouses. This finding is important because it challenges traditional gendered assumptions regarding the roles that men and women play in family dynamics and their responsiveness to educational interventions. Regardless of whether the parent was male or female, both benefited equally from the parenting education programs, suggesting that these programs are universally effective in fostering non-violent conflict resolution and improving communication.

This result aligns with previous studies that have demonstrated the universal applicability of parenting programmes across gender lines. For instance, a study Backhaus et al. (2024) found that parenting programmes were equally effective in improving conflict resolution and reducing aggressive behaviours among both fathers and mothers. Similarly, Geiger and Campbell (2020) showed that gender did not significantly affect the outcomes of parenting programmes aimed at reducing family conflict and violence, reinforcing the idea that these interventions address core behavioural and relational skills applicable to all parents, regardless of gender.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study confirms that parenting education programmes are effective in reducing domestic violence among parents of secondary school students in Lagos State, Nigeria. The programmes have proven successful in fostering healthier family environments by enhancing conflict resolution skills, improving spousal communication, and promoting non-violent approaches to discipline. Importantly, these benefits were observed across both male and female parents, challenging traditional gendered perceptions of family dynamics and highlighting the universal applicability of these interventions. These findings emphasise the value of structured educational efforts in addressing domestic violence and fostering harmonious relationships within families.

Limitations

This study has some limitations to its generalisability. The use of purposive sampling technique to select the participants may limit the generalisation of the findings to areas that did not have representation. Also, quantitative study may have not captured sufficient information about the outcome of the intervention in reducing domestic violence. Therefore, further studies could employ qualitative or mixed research design to have a deep understanding of the situation.

Implications for counselling

The findings from this study hold several key implications for counselling practices, particularly in the context of family dynamics and domestic violence prevention. The effectiveness of parenting education programmes in reducing domestic violence among parents of secondary school students in Lagos State, Nigeria, emphasises the vital role that such interventions can play in fostering healthier relationships. Counsellors working with families affected by domestic violence should consider incorporating parenting education into their treatment plans as a preventive and restorative measure. These programmes provide structured guidance that helps parents learn and adopt more positive communication and conflict resolution strategies, leading to a decrease in aggressive behaviours within the home.

The study's results demonstrate that spousal communication skills significantly improve following participation in these programmes. This highlights the importance of integrating

communication skills training into counselling sessions with couples, particularly those experiencing conflict or aggression. Counsellors should focus on helping clients develop calm, constructive communication techniques, as these are instrumental in reducing tension and fostering peaceful coexistence. This aligns with Nwaoba and Queen (2022), who found that positive communication fosters harmonious relationships. By teaching these skills in counselling settings, professionals can help clients build more resilient relationships and reduce the likelihood of domestic violence.

Furthermore, the study’s findings regarding improved conflict resolution skills suggest that counsellors should incorporate conflict management strategies into their practice. Structured interventions, as reported by Fox et al. (2016), Hameeda Narejo et al. (2023), and O’Leary and Feinberg (2021), have proven effective in helping individuals resolve conflicts more peacefully. Counsellors can use these insights to promote practical conflict resolution methods tailored to the specific needs of families, empowering them to handle disagreements without resorting to violence.

Additionally, the finding that there were no significant differences in the effectiveness of parenting education programmes based on gender suggests that counsellors should approach domestic violence prevention with a universal strategy. Both male and female clients can benefit equally from these programmes, allowing counsellors to apply a gender-neutral approach when designing interventions that focus on communication and conflict resolution.

In conclusion, counsellors working with families and individuals facing domestic violence should prioritise parenting education programmes as part of their therapeutic toolkit.

By fostering better communication, teaching conflict resolution skills, and offering stress management strategies, counsellors can help reduce domestic violence and promote healthier, more harmonious relationships.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government and educational institutions should prioritise expanding parenting education programmes to reach more families, particularly those in high-risk communities, to reduce domestic violence further and enhance family communication and conflict resolution.
2. Schools should consider integrating parenting education into their curricula for parents of secondary school students, as it has demonstrated positive outcomes in improving family dynamics and reducing domestic violence. This can take place during the open day.
3. Parenting programmes should include follow-up sessions and continuous support for parents to ensure the long-term sustainability of the learned skills in communication, conflict resolution, and stress management.
4. Future iterations should be tailored to address the specific needs of different families,

including those with varying cultural backgrounds or unique challenges, to maximise the impact.

5. Additional studies should be conducted to explore the long-term impact of parenting education on domestic violence and to identify any potential areas for improvement in programme delivery. Future research could also examine the influence of other factors, such as socioeconomic status, on the effectiveness of these programmes.

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