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# AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE IN THE NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SECTOR: IMPLICATIONS FOR INTEGRATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract - This paper provides an overview of aggression and violence in the Nigerian educational sector and its implications for integration and national development. The paper describes in detail what constitutes aggression and violence according to social-psychological research. It outlines the many forms aggression and violence can occur. It also looks at the probable causes of aggression and violence in the educational sector and its implications for integration and national development suggesting strategies to promote integration and national development. The paper concludes that basically, violent and aggressive tendencies can be controlled if the rightful measures are taken. Once violent and aggressive behavior is suppressed, the environment will be conducive for educational activities which will equip individuals with knowledge, skills, aptitudes, attitudes and values which will also influence integration and national development.**

**Key Words:** Aggression, Violence, Integration, National development.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The alarming rate of violence and aggressive behavior virtually in all tribes of Nigeria including her educational system has been an issue of national concern. No meaningful national development can take place without education. In other words, educational activities can only take place under a

conducive environment. Aggression is a pervasive problem for Nigerian students. It is at times expressed in the most unlikely places under unexpected and unsettling conditions. It could be argued that when students perceive threat arising from one form of aggression or the other, they may become destabilized as they would tend to spend the time meant for studying in finding ways to cope with the perceived threats.

Clearly, any form of distraction within a learning setting is counter-productive. It is the researcher's belief that such distractions could constitute a hindrance to Nigeria's ability to achieve the national goal of self-reliance over the years. Students' violence has occasionally caused some schools in the nation to be shut down spontaneously thereby stalling academic activities. Nigeria as a nation understands and appreciates the fact that education is a precursor to nation building [11], and therefore considers education to be a catalyst for all aspects of development.

In view of this, and in acknowledgment of the fact that the children of today are the leaders of tomorrow, a great deal of resources has been directed toward providing education at all school levels. But rather than students devoting their times to learning, there is a tendency for many to spend their energy on the perpetuation of violence. This reduces the amount of time and level of concentration they put into their studies. It has been noted that students who experience stressful conditions are susceptible to go through unstable lives. This condition is not only experienced when aggression such as violence breaks out in school, but also within the periods of calmness. Students also



feel distressed in times of calmness; as such times are used in reminiscing and thinking about the next occurrence of aggression. This indeed is an unhealthy development because it reduces study time.

Hence, the conditions under which students' study are considered as threatening. Apparently, not much can be achieved under such circumstances. Government, parents, religious groups and other stakeholders in education have made some effort at curbing the menace of aggression among students. Disciplinary measures, which include rustication in some cases, have been used to check the use of aggression by students as a means of achieving their goals. In spite of such steps, aggression in schools has continued unabated. This research has become imperative as an effort at helping particularly the school system.

Integration simply refers to developing a strong bondage between the members of society that are being divided on the ideological, ethnic, religious and cultural fundamentals. Integration is the process of achieving cohesion, stability, prosperity, strength and feelings of being united as a state. It may also be a common consciousness to rigorously stress on establishing a common identity. For developing national cohesion, the formulation of national identity is pivotal. Thus, integration helps in overcoming divisions that impede the flow of goods, services, capital, people and ideas. Divisions are a constraint to economic growth, especially in developing countries.

This paper focuses on answering the question: What are aggression and violence and describes in detail what constitutes aggression and violence according to social-psychological research. It outlined the many forms aggression and violence can occur. It will also look at the likely causes of aggression and violence in schools and its effect on learning and then proffer strategies on how to combat it in order to promote integration and national development.

## II. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

### a. Aggression

Human aggression is one of the most serious social problems in Nigeria that requires serious attention because of its threat to the Nigerian educational system. Aggression can be better understood by surveying the following definitions. [18] describes aggression as hostile actions intended to hurt somebody or establish dominance. In other words, aggression is used as an instrument to reach a goal. It is a means to a desired end. [3] viewed aggression as a violation of social norms or hostile reactions contrary to accepted rules of conduct. It is a forceful violation

of another's rights and an offensive action so as to boldly assert rights.

Patterson [19] opines that aggression is a crude attempt at behavior coercion. Aggression may hurt their victims who can result to illness or emotional distress but their actions are primarily to influence the other person's behavior negatively. In social psychology, aggression is most commonly defined as a behavior that is intended to harm another person who is motivated to avoid that harm [5; 8]. This harm can take many forms such as physical injury, hurt feelings, and damaged social relationships and so on. Aggression in our society has diminished the trust in others that is necessary for social harmony. It has also reduced effective collaboration with friends and neighbors in sharing or solving problems. People in the society make the world difficult when they assault others or encourage aggressive activities.

### *Forms of Aggression*

According to [5], aggression is most often classified as physical, verbal or relational in nature. Physical Aggression is the aggressive behavior that physically harms yourself or someone else, such as hitting, biting, using weapons, punching, kicking, stabbing or shooting. Mental Aggression refers to aggressive behavior experienced with the intent of harming someone mentally, such as causing anxiety, stress, or depression. Emotional Aggression is aggressive behavior that harms someone emotionally and causes them to struggle with expressing themselves. Verbal Aggression refers to aggressive behavior that is spoken by one person to make another person feel less confident in their own skin. Verbal aggression involves using words to harm another person, for example, name calling, swearing or screaming. Relational aggression, sometimes called social aggression, involves harming another person by damaging their social relationships or making them feel unaccepted or excluded, for example, spreading rumors, neglecting to invite someone to a social event, or telling others not to hang out with someone [7].

It has also been proposed that aggression can be postural in nature, for example, making threatening gestures or invading personal space [15]. Aggression is a phenomenon that can take many forms ranging from relatively minor acts such as name calling or pushing to more serious acts such as hitting, kicking or punching to severe acts such as stabbing, shooting or killing.

### b. Violence



Although violence is sometimes treated as separate from aggression. All acts of violence are considered instances of aggression, but not all acts of aggression are considered violence. For example, a child pushing another child away from a favorite toy would be considered aggressive but not violent. Violence is most often researched in the context of extreme physical aggression. Social psychologists use the term violence to refer to aggression that has extreme physical harm, such as injury or death, as its goal.

Thus, violence is a subset of aggression. All violent acts are aggressive, but only acts that are intended to cause extreme physical damage, such as murder, assault, rape and robbery are violent. Slapping someone really hard across the face might be violent but calling people names would only be aggressive. There have been various attempts by experts to define the word "violence." It could simply mean any unjust or unwanted exertion of force or power against a person which could be physical, psychological or sexual. According to [24], violence is an unnecessary set of threats while [9] sees violence from a broad perspective as the use of force whether overt or covert in order to wrestle from individuals or groups something they are not disposed to give of their own free will.

In corroborating this, [17] says violence is the exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury on or cause damage to persons or property, action or conduct characterized by this, and treatment or usage tending to cause bodily injury or forcibly interfering with personal freedom. The World Health Organization [27] defined violence as the intentional use of physical force or power threatened or actual against oneself, another person, a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation. Children experience violence in their homes, schools and from other children.

Violence has severe implications for children's development. It can affect their health, their ability to learn or even their willingness to go to school. Children subjected to violence are prone to become aggressive and violent in later life. Aggression and violence are terms often used interchangeably; however, the two differ. Violence can be defined as the use of physical force with the intent to injure another person or destroy property, while aggression is generally defined as angry or violent feelings or behavior.

#### *Forms of Violence*

Violence exists in various forms and is discussed. Physical violence simply refers to any act which

causes physical harm as a result of unlawful physical force. Physical violence can take the form of, among others, serious and minor assault, deprivation of liberty and manslaughter [6]. According to American Nurses Association [1] physical violence include but not limited to scratching, pushing, shoving, throwing, grabbing, biting, choking, use of a weapon, forced sexual activity, injury or death from a weapon and use of restraints or one's body size or strength against another person. This type of violence does not only lead to physical harm, but can also have severe negative psychological effects – for example, if a child is frequently a victim of physical violence at home, he or she can suffer from mental health problems and be traumatized as a consequence of this victimization.

Psychological violence refers to any intentional conduct that seriously impairs another person's psychological integrity through coercion or threats. It is also any act which causes psychological harm to an individual. Psychological violence can take the form of, for example, coercion, defamation, verbal insult or harassment. Its significant characteristic is an abusive pattern of behaviour occurring over time – within or outside the family. It not only affects individuals' mental health and their social networks, but also deprives them of opportunities for future personal, social and economic development.

Examples of psychological violence include acts such as isolation from others, verbal aggression, threats, intimidation, control, harassment or stalking, insults, humiliation and defamation [6]. Psychological violence can be defined as the intentional act against a person or collective force that results in physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social harm, including insults, threats, attacks, verbal abuse [22] [20].

Sexual violence is any sexual act or attempt to obtain a sexual act by violence or coercion, acts to traffic a person or acts directed against a person's sexuality, regardless of the relationship to the victim. It occurs in times of peace and armed conflict situations, is widespread and is considered to be one of the most traumatic, pervasive, and most common human rights violations. It is rarely a crime of passion, and is rather an aggressive act that frequently aims to express power and dominance over the victim. The World Health Organization (WHO) in its 2002 World Report on Violence and Health defined sexual violence as: "any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work".



WHO's definition of sexual violence includes but is not limited to rape, which is defined as physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration of the vulva or anus, using a penis, other body parts or an object. Sexual violence consists in a purposeful action of which the intention is often to inflict severe humiliation on the victim(s) and diminish human dignity. In the case where others are forced to watch acts of sexual violence, such acts aim at intimidating the larger community. Other acts incorporated in sexual violence are various forms of sexual assaults, such as forced contact between mouth and penis, vulva or anus.

Sexual violence can include coerced contact between the mouth and penis, vulva or anus, or acts that do not involve physical contact between the victim and the perpetrator—for example, sexual harassment, threats, and peeping. Coercion, with regard to sexual violence, can cover a whole spectrum of degrees of force. Apart from physical force, it may involve psychological intimidation, blackmail or other threats – for instance, the threat of physical harm, of being dismissed from a job or of not obtaining a job that is sought. It may also occur when the person being attacked is unable to give consent – for instance, while drunk, drugged, asleep or mentally incapable of understanding the situation. Such broader definitions of sexual violence are found within international law.

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) [23] has established in article 7 (1) (g) that "rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity" constitutes a crime against humanity. Sexual violence includes all forms of sexual abuse, sexual assault, pornography, prostitution, trafficking for sexual purposes, sex tourism, early and forced marriage and enslavement [26].

Gender based violence refers to violence that targets individuals or groups on the basis of their gender. GBV is violence directed against a person because of that person's gender or violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately. Violence against women is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in physical harm, sexual harm, psychological, or economic harm or suffering to women. It can include violence against women, domestic violence against women, men or children living in the same domestic unit. Although women and girls are the main victims of GBV, it also causes severe harm to families and communities [4].

The United Nations' Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) [25] defines it as "violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately", in its General Recommendation. This includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, the threat of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty. Together with sexual violence, and violence against women, Gender-based violence is used interchangeably. This does not mean that all acts against a woman are gender-based violence, or that all victims of gender-based violence are female.

The surrounding circumstances where men are victim of sexual violence could be a man being harassed, beaten or killed because they do not conform to view of masculinity, which are accepted by the society. It also refers to injustices and all forms of unequal treatment as a result of either being a male or female, for example, giving a boy a stricter punishment than a girl for the same kind of offense just because he is a boy [21]. Domestic violence (also named domestic abuse or family violence) is violence or other abuse in a domestic setting, such as in marriage or cohabitation. Domestic violence is often used as a synonym for intimate partner violence, which is committed by one of the people in an intimate relationship against the other person, and can take place in heterosexual or same-sex relationships, or between former spouses or partners. In its broadest sense, domestic violence also involves violence against children, teenagers, parents, or the elderly. It takes multiple forms, including physical, verbal, emotional, economic, religious, reproductive, and sexual abuse, which can range from subtle, coercive forms to marital rape to violent physical abuse such as choking, beating, female genital mutilation, and acid throwing those results in disfigurement or death. The victims may be trapped in domestically violent situations through isolation, power and control, traumatic bonding to the abuser, cultural acceptance, lack of financial resources, fear, shame, or to protect children. As a result of abuse, victims may experience physical disabilities, deregulated aggression, chronic health problems, mental illness, limited finances, and a poor ability to create healthy relationships. Victims may experience severe psychological disorders, such as posttraumatic stress disorder.

Children who live in a household with violence often show psychological problems from an early age, such as avoidance, hyper vigilance to threats, and deregulated aggression which may contribute to vicarious traumatization [2]. School based violence is



made up of aggressive acts perpetrated by and for members of the educational community (teachers, students, students' relatives or teachers, cleaning staff, among others. Consequently, school violence originates and develops in the school or in neighboring places that are linked to it, affecting the teaching - learning process and the physical and mental stability of the victim. Violence can be manifested in different ways; can be verbal, physical or psychological. It can be said that school violence can be carried out by a teacher to the student, by a student to a teacher, by the student to another student, by teacher to another teacher, among others [16].

### III. CAUSES OF AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE

The society can do better if it understands the factors that stimulate aggression and violence. Thus, it is necessary to know the psychological processes within the individual that helps promote or trigger aggression and violence. Some of these factors include:

1. Frustrations: Most aggressive and violent actions are likely due to previous frustrations. Frustration is an internal emotional reaction that arises from thwarting or blocking someone's goal. Aggression is based on the amount of satisfaction the thwarted individual had anticipated but failed to obtain. Simply put, when people are unexpectedly kept from achieving their goals they will be more inclined to hurt someone.
2. Mental health condition: Several mental health conditions can be associated with aggressive behavior. For example, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Bipolar disorder, borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), Narcissism, Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), epilepsy, dementia, psychosis, brain injuries or abnormalities can influence aggressive and violent behavior.
3. Exposure to violence on media: Research has proven that children are influenced more by seeing violent films than by seeing real people acting aggressively [14]. Heavy viewing of violence on television is clearly associated with aggression among boys than girls. [10] found out that television violence endures for years using four hundred and twenty-seven (427) young adults whose viewing habits had been studied at the age of eight (8), the best predictor of aggressiveness in 19 years old men and women were the degree of Violence in the program they have seen as children.

4. Hormones: Aggression and violence are linked with brain chemicals like serotonin and testosterone. Low levels of serotonin have been linked with violent behavior, and higher secretion of testosterone has been shown to be correlated with violent behavior. There is also the frustration aggression theory that suggests that building up of frustration often leads to aggressive behavior [13].
5. Environment: Studies have found that housing, schools and neighborhood can contribute to aggression. Oppressive environment such as poverty, social disorganization, neighborhood tensions or threatening environment can cause aggression especially when they have been handled harshly and inconsistently; they will build up anger from lack of care. This may cause the individual to be mean, hurtful, and hateful and act violently in an attempt to strike back.
6. Genetic factors: According to [12], the urge to violence is as a result of pressure from our innate and irrational id instincts. People are aggressive because they have a built-in aggression instinct. Thus, aggression is largely inherited. Family history of violence - some medical research indicates there is a genetic link that can predispose someone to violent behavior.
7. Other causes of aggression and violence include: Exposure to abuse - physical, verbal, or sexual; Neglectful parenting - parents that don't supervise children or provide a supportive home environment. Emotional trauma and stress - being exposed to a traumatic event or experiencing constant stress can cause violent outbursts; Bullying - being a bully or being a bullying victim; and Substance abuse - alcohol and other illegal substances can predispose people to aggression. It also includes the presence of weapons in the home - having access to guns, crossbows, knives, etc. can make an individual prone to using these weapons, and playing violent video games - first-person shooter games are often very realistic.

### IV. EFFECTS OF AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE

The effect of violence on the students could hamper the achievement of personal educational goals, self-actualization or contribution to the society. It may also lead to a life of crime or other anti-social behaviors which may hamper meaningful study. The effect of violence will also affect parents due to the prolonged money spent due to unplanned schools' closure or death of wards and unfulfilled dreams concerning their children. It will make educational planning an arduous



task for the government, due to incessant closing of schools, the eroding of people's confidence in public schools due to insecurity of lives of students.

On the part of the school, it may give undue popularity to the school or tarnish the good name, image and reputation of the school or bring stigmatization to the product of the school. Violence in schools disrupts academic program, when it leads to students' unrest and unplanned schools' closure and above all creates an uncondusive environment for teaching and learning process whereby staff and students live in constant fear of their lives. A society where violence and other anti-social behaviors thrive will have diminishing productivity, since those that are supposed to be pillars of the society have either died or cannot fulfill societal expectations of contributing meaningfully to the society.

#### V. IMPLICATIONS FOR INTEGRATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Studies have shown that people are always reluctant to integrate into a single identity leaving their regional and ethnical identity if the mode of amalgamation is authoritative and not people oriented [11]. Looking at the examples of countries with diverse ethno-racial population like USA, Canada and Malaysia, the process of cohesion has always been of a melting-pot approach in which the ethnic and racial loyalties have been melted within the larger interest of state and developed a national identity with a democratic system of representation for the former.

One of the goals of education in Nigeria is to transform the nation into a free, democratic and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy, and a land full of bright opportunities for all its citizens [11]. The success of any educational enterprise is hinged on a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning process which will bring about innovation and development to the country.

Stakeholders in the educational enterprise need to put in place a mechanism to ensure safety in our schools. The films censor boards should monitor the films released and shown on television and also video games. Guidance and counseling services should be intensified so as to identify students with learning difficulties or mal-adjusted behaviors. Security of life and properties in schools should be the concern of all and students should be part of the security network in schools. Parents should be alive to their responsibilities and be there for their children.

Government agencies should set up a compensation fund for victims of violence; it will increase solidarity among people.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

Educational system provides the basis for the development of a Nation and educational pursuit can only take place in a peaceful environment. Integration helps in overcoming divisions that impede the flow of goods, services, capital, people and ideas. Divisions are a constraint to economic growth, especially in developing countries.

Violent and aggressive tendencies can be controlled if the rightful measures are taken. Once violent and aggressive behavior is suppressed, the environment will be conducive for educational activities which will equip individuals with knowledge, skills, aptitudes, attitudes and values which will also influence integration and national development.

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