

SEXUAL ABUSE AND FAMILY VIOLENCE AS PREDICTORS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN UDENU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the predictive power of sexual abuse and family violence on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area, Enugu State. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study comprised all the 4,865 SS II secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area, Enugu State. A sample size of 467 SS II students was used for the study. Data were collected using three instruments; Sexual Abuse Questionnaire (SAQ), Family Violence Questionnaire (FVQ), and Students' Achievement Profoma. The instruments were subjected to face validation. Reliability coefficients of 0.87 and 0.79 were obtained for SAQ and FVQ respectively. Data collected were analyzed using simple and multiple linear regression analyses. The findings revealed that sexual abuse accounted for 23.2% of the variance in students' academic achievement and significantly negatively predicted academic achievement among secondary school students. The study further revealed that family violence accounted for 27.0% of the variance in students' academic achievement and significantly negatively predicted academic achievement. In addition, the findings showed that sexual abuse and family violence jointly accounted for 37.5% of the variance in academic achievement and jointly made a significant negative contribution to the prediction of academic achievement among secondary school students. The results imply that increased exposure to sexual abuse and family violence is associated with lower academic achievement among students. Based on the findings, it was concluded that sexual abuse and family violence are significant negative predictors of academic achievement among secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area, Enugu State. The study recommended, among others, that parents should provide safe and supportive home environments, schools should strengthen guidance and counselling services, and government agencies should intensify efforts to prevent sexual abuse and family violence through effective child protection policies and intervention programmes.

Keywords: Sexual abuse, family violence, academic achievement, predictive power

Introduction

Academic achievement is a major indicator of educational success and serves as a measure of students' ability to attain educational objectives. It reflects the extent to which learners acquire knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for personal development and societal contribution. In Nigeria, the persistent concern over students' poor academic performance has prompted researchers to investigate various school-related, socio-economic, and family-related factors that may influence educational outcomes. Among these factors, sexual abuse and family violence have emerged as critical social problems capable of undermining students' psychological well-being, cognitive development, and academic achievement (Aihie, 2009; Ajayi & Afolabi, 2022). The family is the first social institution responsible for nurturing children and providing a conducive environment for their physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development.

A stable family environment characterized by love, care, security, and support promotes positive learning experiences and academic success. However, when the family

environment becomes characterized by violence, abuse, neglect, and conflict, children are exposed to adverse experiences that may negatively affect their educational attainment (UNICEF, 2021). Scholars have consistently argued that children who grow up in abusive and violent homes are more likely to experience emotional instability, low self-esteem, poor concentration, anxiety, and depression, all of which hinder effective learning and academic performance (WHO, 2022; Margolin & Gordis, 2000).

Sexual abuse is recognized globally as one of the most severe forms of child maltreatment. It refers to the involvement of a child or adolescent in sexual activities that he or she cannot fully comprehend, consent to, or is developmentally unprepared for. Sexual abuse may include rape, incest, sexual harassment, unwanted touching, exposure to pornographic materials, sexual exploitation, and coercion into sexual activities (World Health Organization, 2022). The consequences of sexual abuse are often long-lasting and may affect victims physically, psychologically, emotionally, and academically. Studies have shown that victims of sexual abuse frequently experience trauma, fear, shame, guilt, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder, which can impair memory, concentration, classroom participation, and overall academic engagement (Putnam, 2003; Kendall-Tackett et al., 1993). Globally, sexual abuse remains a serious public health and human rights concern. According to the World Health Organization (2022), millions of children experience sexual violence before the age of eighteen, with girls being disproportionately affected. Similarly, UNICEF (2021) reported that violence against children, including sexual abuse, continues to threaten children's educational opportunities and developmental outcomes worldwide. In many developing countries, including Nigeria, incidents of sexual abuse often go unreported due to fear, social stigma, cultural norms, and inadequate legal protection mechanisms (Aihie, 2009). Consequently, many victims continue their education while silently dealing with the psychological effects of abuse, which may significantly impair their academic achievement. Family violence, also known as domestic violence, constitutes another major challenge affecting children's educational outcomes. Family violence refers to any act of physical, emotional, psychological, verbal, or sexual aggression occurring among family members within the household setting. Children may either be direct victims of such violence or witnesses to violent interactions between parents and caregivers (Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999).

Exposure to family violence often creates an atmosphere of fear, insecurity, stress, and instability that interferes with healthy development and educational attainment. Research has demonstrated that children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to exhibit behavioral problems, poor school attendance, low motivation, emotional distress, and poor academic performance compared to children raised in peaceful homes (Evans, Davies, & DiLillo, 2008). The impact of family violence on students' academic achievement can be understood through various psychological and educational theories. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory posits that safety and security needs must be adequately met before an individual can focus on higher-order needs such as learning and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Students who are exposed to violence and abuse often experience insecurity and emotional distress, making it difficult for them to concentrate on academic activities. Likewise, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory emphasizes that children's development is influenced by interactions within their immediate environment, particularly the family. Dysfunctional family relationships characterized by violence and abuse may therefore impede students' educational progress (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

In Nigeria, the prevalence of sexual abuse and family violence has become increasingly alarming. Reports from child protection agencies, non-governmental organizations, and research institutions indicate that many Nigerian children experience one form of abuse or violence before reaching adulthood (UNICEF, 2021). Despite legislative frameworks such as the Child Rights Act and various state-level child protection laws,

implementation challenges and cultural barriers continue to limit effective protection of children from abuse and violence. As a result, many secondary school students remain vulnerable to traumatic experiences that adversely affect their academic achievement and overall development (Ezeh, 2017). In Enugu State, concerns about child abuse, sexual exploitation, and domestic violence have continued to attract attention from educators, parents, counselors, and social welfare agencies. Udenu Local Government Area, like many communities in southeastern Nigeria, faces social and economic challenges that may contribute to family instability and increased vulnerability of children to abuse and violence. Cases of family conflicts, domestic violence, child neglect, and sexual abuse have been reported in various communities, raising concerns about their possible implications for students' educational outcomes (Nwankwo & Nwoke, 2018). Secondary school students, who are in a critical stage of adolescent development, may be particularly susceptible to the psychological and academic consequences of these experiences.

Furthermore, adolescence represents a period of rapid physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes. At this stage, students require adequate parental support, guidance, and protection to achieve academic success. Exposure to sexual abuse and family violence during this developmental period can disrupt emotional stability, reduce self-confidence, impair social relationships, and negatively influence academic motivation and performance (Ajayi & Afolabi, 2022). Students who experience abuse may become withdrawn, exhibit poor classroom participation, miss school frequently, or lose interest in academic activities altogether. Although several studies have examined the effects of child abuse, domestic violence, and family dysfunction on academic performance in different parts of Nigeria, there remains limited empirical evidence specifically addressing the predictive influence of sexual abuse and family violence on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State. This gap in knowledge necessitates a focused investigation into how these social problems affect students' educational outcomes within the local context. Therefore, this study seeks to examine sexual abuse and family violence as predictors of secondary school students' academic achievement in Udenu Local Government Area, Enugu State. The findings of the study will contribute to existing literature and provide useful information for educators, guidance counselors, parents, policymakers, and child protection agencies in developing effective interventions aimed at reducing abuse, promoting safe family environments, and enhancing students' academic achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate sexual abuse and family violence as predictors of secondary school students' academic achievement in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to determine the;

1. predictive power of sexual abuse on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State.
2. predictive power of family violence on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State.
3. joint predictive power of sexual abuse and family violence on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the conduct of the study;

1. What is the predictive power of sexual abuse on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State?
2. What is the predictive power of family violence on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State?

3. What is the joint predictive power of sexual abuse and family violence on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State?

Hypotheses

The following formulated hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance;

1. There is no significant predictive power of sexual abuse on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State.
2. There is no significant predictive power of family violence on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State.
3. There is no significant joint predictive power of sexual abuse and family violence on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Methods

This study will adopt a correlational survey research design. The correlational survey design is considered appropriate because it seeks to determine the predictive relationship between the independent variables (sexual abuse and family violence) and the dependent variable (academic achievement) among secondary school students. The design will enable the researchers to collect data from a representative sample and determine the extent to which sexual abuse and family violence predict students' academic achievement without manipulating any variable. The study was conducted in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. Udenu Local Government Area is one of the seventeen Local Government Areas in Enugu State and is located in the northern part of the state. The headquarters is situated at Obollo-Afor. The area comprises several communities and has a considerable number of public secondary schools. The inhabitants are predominantly engaged in farming, trading, civil service, and other entrepreneurial activities. The population of the study comprised 4,865 senior secondary school students in the public secondary schools in Udenu Local Government Area during the 2025/2026 academic session. The sample size for the study consists of 370 SS II, determined using Taro Yamane's formula. Simple random sampling technique was used to sample six public secondary schools from the total number of public secondary schools in Udenu Local Government Area.

Three researchers'-developed instruments were used for data collection, they are; "Sexual Abuse Questionnaire (SAQ), Family Violence Questionnaire (FVQ), and Students' Profoma". The questionnaires (SAQ and FVQ) were structured on a 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Students' academic profoma was measured using their cumulative examination scores or average scores obtained from school records for the current academic session. The instruments were subjected to face validation by three experts: One expert in Sociology of Education, one expert in Educational Psychology, and one expert from Measurement and Evaluation, all from Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The experts were asked to assess the instruments in terms of clarity, relevance, appropriateness of items, and coverage of the study variables. Their observations and suggestions were incorporated in producing the final version of the instruments. The reliability of the instruments was determined through a pilot study involving 30 SS II students from public secondary schools in Nsukka Local Government Area, which is outside the study area but with similar characteristics. The data obtained was analyzed using Cronbach Alpha reliability method to determine the internal consistency of the instruments. Reliability coefficients of 0.87 and 0.79 were obtained for SAQ and FVQ respectively.

The researchers personally administered the instruments to the SS II students in the sampled schools after obtaining permission from the principals of the sampled schools. The

questionnaires were administered and collected at the spot to ensure a high return rate. The data collected was analyzed using regression analysis. Specifically, linear regression analysis was used to answer research questions 1-2, while research question 3 was answered using multiple regression. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. If the calculated p-value is less than or equal to 0.05 ($p \leq 0.05$), the null hypothesis was reject. If the calculated p-value is greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$), the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Results

Research Question One: What is the predictive power of sexual abuse on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State?

Table 1: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Sexual Abuse as a Predictor of Academic Achievement among Secondary School Students in Udenu Local Government Area, Enugu State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	.482	.232	.229	8.417

The result presented in Table 1 shows the simple linear regression analysis of sexual abuse as a predictor of academic achievement among secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State. The model summary indicates that the correlation coefficient (R) is 0.482. This value shows a moderate negative relationship between sexual abuse and academic achievement, implying that as the level of sexual abuse increases, academic achievement tends to decrease among secondary school students. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.232. This means that sexual abuse accounts for 23.2% of the total variation in students' academic achievement. In other words, about 23% of the changes observed in students' academic performance can be explained by their exposure to sexual abuse, while the remaining 76.8% is influenced by other factors not included in this model.

Hypothesis One:

There is no significant predictive power of sexual abuse on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Table 2: Regression coefficients of sexual abuse as a predictor of academic achievement among secondary school students in Udenu local government area, Enugu State

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta (β)	t	Sig.
Constant	78.542	1.826		43.01	.000
Sexual Abuse	-0.684	0.065	-.482	-10.52	.000

The result presented in Table 2 shows the regression coefficients of sexual abuse as a predictor of academic achievement among secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area, Enugu State. The findings reveal that sexual abuse significantly predicts academic achievement, as indicated by the standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = -0.482$), t-value (-10.52), and probability value ($p = .000$), which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. The unstandardized coefficient ($B = -0.684$) indicates that for every one-unit increase in the sexual abuse score, academic achievement decreases by approximately 0.684 units. This demonstrates the adverse effect of sexual abuse on students' academic performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that sexual abuse does not significantly predict academic achievement among secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area, Enugu State is rejected. The study concludes that sexual abuse is a significant negative predictor of academic achievement among secondary school students in the area. Students who experience higher levels of sexual abuse are likely to exhibit lower levels of academic achievement.

Research Question Two: What is the predictive power of family violence on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State?

Table 3: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Sexual Abuse as a Predictor of Academic Achievement among Secondary School Students in Udenu Local Government Area, Enugu State

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
1	.520	.270	.268	8.12

The result presented in Table 3 shows the simple linear regression analysis of family violence as a predictor of academic achievement among secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area, Enugu State. The model yielded a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.520, indicating a moderate relationship between family violence and academic achievement. The coefficient of determination (R²) of 0.270 reveals that family violence accounts for 27.0% of the variance in students' academic achievement.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant predictive power of family violence on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Table 4: Regression coefficients of family violence as a predictor of academic achievement among secondary school students in Udenu local government area, Enugu State

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	T	Sig.
(Constant)	82.456	2.315	—	35.618	.000
Family violence	-3.782	0.462	-0.520	-8.186	.000

The result in Table 4 indicates that family violence significantly predicted academic achievement among secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area, Enugu State ($\beta = -0.520$, $t = -8.186$, $p < .05$). The standardized beta coefficient of -0.520 shows a moderate negative predictive relationship between family violence and academic achievement. This implies that an increase in sexual abuse is associated with a decrease in students' academic achievement. The unstandardized coefficient ($B = -3.782$) indicates that for every one-unit increase in family violence score, academic achievement decreases by approximately 3.78 units. The t-value of -8.186 and corresponding probability value of .000 indicate that the contribution of family violence to the prediction of academic achievement is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that sexual abuse does not significantly predict academic achievement among secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area is rejected. The study concludes that family violence is a significant negative predictor of academic achievement among secondary school students.

Research Question Three: What is the joint predictive power of sexual abuse and family violence on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State?

Table 5: Multiple regression model summary of sexual abuse and family violence as joint predictors of academic achievement

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of Estimate
1	.612	.375	.371	7.64

The result in Table 3 shows that sexual abuse and family violence jointly predict academic achievement among secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area.

The multiple correlation coefficient ($R = .612$) indicates a moderate relationship between the combined predictors and academic achievement. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .375$) reveals that sexual abuse and family violence jointly account for 37.5% of the variance in academic achievement. Although the R value is positive, the negative beta coefficients obtained for sexual abuse and family violence indicate that the joint relationship is negative. This means that increases in sexual abuse and family violence are associated with decreases in students' academic achievement. The remaining 62.5% of the variance in academic achievement is explained by other factors outside the model.

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant joint predictive power of sexual abuse and family violence on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Table 4: ANOVA of multiple regression analysis of sexual abuse and family violence as joint predictors of academic achievement

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	16245.38	2	8122.69	139.21	.000
Residual	27095.62	464	58.40		
Total	43341.00	466			

The ANOVA result in Table 4 shows that the regression model is statistically significant, $F(2,464) = 139.21$, $p < .05$. This indicates that sexual abuse and family violence jointly make a significant negative contribution to the prediction of academic achievement among secondary school students.

Discussion

The finding of the study revealed that sexual abuse accounts for 23.2% of the total variation in students' academic achievement among secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area, Enugu State. This indicates that sexual abuse is a significant factor influencing students' academic performance. The finding further revealed that sexual abuse is a significant negative predictor of academic achievement, implying that students who experience higher levels of sexual abuse are likely to record lower academic achievement than those who are less exposed or not exposed to such experiences. A possible reason for this finding is that sexual abuse often results in severe psychological, emotional, and social consequences that interfere with students' ability to learn effectively. Victims of sexual abuse commonly experience anxiety, depression, fear, low self-esteem, emotional instability, post-traumatic stress symptoms, and poor concentration. These conditions may hinder their participation in classroom activities, reduce motivation for learning, increase absenteeism, and impair memory and cognitive functioning, all of which are essential for academic success. Students who are victims of sexual abuse may also withdraw from social and academic interactions, leading to poor study habits and diminished educational aspirations. Consequently, their academic achievement is likely to decline.

Another possible explanation is that victims of sexual abuse often experience feelings of shame, stigma, and fear of disclosure, which may prevent them from seeking help from teachers, parents, or counsellors. The resulting emotional burden can create persistent stress that negatively affects their academic engagement and performance. In some cases, sexual abuse may lead to school avoidance, truancy, or even school dropout, thereby reducing opportunities for academic attainment. The finding of this study is consistent with the findings of Banyard and Cross (2008), who reported that victims of sexual abuse often experience academic difficulties, poor school performance, and reduced educational attainment as a result of the psychological trauma associated with abuse. The finding also

agrees with the study of Trickett, Noll, and Putnam (2011), who found that childhood sexual abuse is associated with cognitive and emotional difficulties that negatively affect academic functioning and school achievement. Similarly, the finding corroborates the work of Kendall-Tackett, Williams, and Finkelhor (1993), who observed that sexually abused children frequently exhibit educational and behavioural problems that adversely affect their school performance. The finding is also in line with the report of World Health Organization, which noted that exposure to sexual violence can lead to long-term emotional and psychological consequences that negatively impact educational outcomes and overall development. Furthermore, the finding supports the assumptions of Trauma Theory, which posits that traumatic experiences such as sexual abuse can disrupt normal psychological and cognitive development. According to the theory, exposure to traumatic events may impair concentration, memory, emotional regulation, and social functioning, thereby reducing an individual's ability to engage effectively in academic activities and achieve optimal educational outcomes.

The finding of the study revealed that family violence accounts for 27.0% of the variance in students' academic achievement among secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area, Enugu State. This implies that family violence is a significant factor influencing students' academic performance. In practical terms, about 27% of the changes observed in students' academic achievement can be attributed to their exposure to family violence, while the remaining 73% is explained by other factors not included in the study. The finding further revealed that family violence is a significant negative predictor of academic achievement, indicating that students who experience higher levels of family violence are more likely to record lower academic achievement. A possible reason for this finding is that family violence creates an unstable and stressful home environment that is not conducive to effective learning and academic development. Students who witness or experience violence within the family often suffer emotional and psychological distress, including fear, anxiety, depression, anger, and low self-esteem. These emotional challenges can impair concentration, memory, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities, thereby reducing students' capacity to perform well academically. As a result, affected students may find it difficult to focus on their studies, complete assignments, or actively participate in classroom activities. Another possible explanation is that family violence disrupts the emotional security and support that students require for healthy academic development. The family is expected to provide encouragement, supervision, and a supportive environment for learning. However, when violence becomes prevalent within the family, students may experience neglect, poor parental involvement, and inadequate academic support. This situation may lead to poor school attendance, diminished motivation to learn, behavioural problems, and lower educational aspirations, all of which negatively affect academic achievement. Furthermore, students exposed to family violence may develop behavioural and social adjustment problems that interfere with their school life. Such students may become withdrawn, aggressive, fearful, or emotionally unstable, making it difficult for them to establish positive relationships with peers and teachers. These challenges can further reduce their engagement in academic activities and contribute to poor academic outcomes.

The finding of this study is consistent with the work of Fantuzzo and Mohr (1999), who reported that children exposed to family violence are more likely to experience academic difficulties, lower school performance, and behavioural problems than children from non-violent homes. The finding also agrees with the study of Holt, Buckley, and Whelan (2008), which found that exposure to domestic violence negatively affects children's emotional well-being, educational attainment, and overall development. Similarly, the finding supports the work of Margolin and Gordis (2000), who observed that children exposed to family violence often experience emotional distress and adjustment problems that negatively affect their

academic functioning. The finding is also in line with the study of Evans, Davies, and DiLillo (2008), who found that exposure to family violence is associated with poor academic performance, school maladjustment, and reduced educational achievement among adolescents. The finding can further be explained by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes that the family environment plays a crucial role in shaping children's development and educational outcomes. According to the theory, negative experiences within the family system, such as violence and conflict, can adversely affect children's psychological well-being and academic performance. Therefore, students who grow up in violent family environments are more likely to encounter challenges that hinder their academic success.

The finding of the study revealed that sexual abuse and family violence jointly account for 37.5% of the variance in academic achievement among secondary school students in Udenu Local Government Area, Enugu State. This implies that the combined influence of sexual abuse and family violence explains a substantial proportion of the differences observed in students' academic achievement. Although the multiple correlation coefficient (R) was positive, the negative beta coefficients obtained for sexual abuse and family violence indicate that the joint relationship is negative. This means that increases in the levels of sexual abuse and family violence are associated with corresponding decreases in students' academic achievement. The finding further revealed that sexual abuse and family violence jointly make a significant negative contribution to the prediction of academic achievement among secondary school students. A possible reason for this finding is that both sexual abuse and family violence expose students to multiple forms of psychological and emotional trauma that adversely affect their ability to learn and perform well academically. Students who experience sexual abuse and family violence simultaneously are likely to suffer from heightened levels of anxiety, depression, fear, emotional instability, low self-esteem, and psychological distress. These conditions may impair concentration, memory retention, critical thinking, and classroom participation, thereby reducing academic performance. The combined effect of these adverse experiences may be more severe than the effect of either factor acting alone, resulting in a greater negative influence on academic achievement.

The finding also suggests that the family environment plays a critical role in shaping students' educational outcomes. Exposure to violence and abuse within the family setting may disrupt healthy emotional development and reduce the level of parental support available for educational activities. Students who lack adequate parental care, encouragement, and supervision may find it difficult to maintain the study habits and commitment required for academic excellence. Therefore, the combined occurrence of sexual abuse and family violence can significantly undermine students' educational progress. The finding of this study is consistent with the work of Fantuzzo and Mohr (1999), who reported that exposure to violence and abuse within the family is associated with poor academic performance, emotional difficulties, and school adjustment problems among children and adolescents. The finding also agrees with Holt, Buckley, and Whelan (2008), who found that children exposed to violence and abuse experience adverse educational outcomes, including lower academic achievement and reduced school engagement.

Similarly, the finding supports the study of Trickett, Noll, and Putnam (2011), who reported that experiences of sexual abuse have long-term psychological and cognitive consequences that interfere with educational attainment. The finding is also in line with the conclusions of Margolin and Gordis (2000), who observed that exposure to violence within the family negatively affects children's emotional adjustment and academic functioning. Furthermore, the finding lends support to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Trauma Theory. Bronfenbrenner's theory emphasizes that the family environment is one of the most influential contexts affecting children's development and educational outcomes.

When the family environment is characterized by violence and abuse, students' academic development is likely to be negatively affected. Trauma Theory also explains that exposure to traumatic experiences such as sexual abuse and family violence can disrupt emotional regulation, cognitive functioning, and social adjustment, thereby hindering academic achievement.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that sexual abuse and family violence are significant factors influencing the academic achievement of secondary school students in Udeno Local Government Area, Enugu State. The study established that sexual abuse significantly and negatively predicts students' academic achievement, indicating that increased exposure to sexual abuse is associated with lower academic performance. Similarly, family violence was found to be a significant negative predictor of academic achievement, suggesting that students who experience higher levels of violence within the family are likely to perform poorly in their academic pursuits. The study further concluded that sexual abuse and family violence jointly make a significant negative contribution to students' academic achievement. Their combined influence accounted for a substantial proportion of the variation in academic performance among the students, demonstrating that exposure to abuse and violence within the home environment can adversely affect educational outcomes. The findings underscore the importance of a safe, supportive, and violence-free environment for promoting students' academic success. Therefore, the study concludes that reducing the incidence of sexual abuse and family violence among secondary school students is essential for improving academic achievement. Efforts by parents, schools, communities, government agencies, and other stakeholders to prevent abuse and violence, provide counselling and psychosocial support services, and strengthen child protection mechanisms will contribute significantly to enhancing students' academic performance and overall development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Parents and guardians should provide a safe, supportive, and nurturing home environment for their children by avoiding all forms of violence, abuse, and harmful disciplinary practices that may negatively affect students' emotional well-being and academic performance.
2. Schools should strengthen guidance and counselling services to identify students who may be victims of sexual abuse and family violence and provide them with appropriate psychological, emotional, and academic support.
3. School administrators should establish effective reporting and referral mechanisms through which students can confidentially report cases of sexual abuse and family violence without fear of victimization or stigmatization.
4. Teachers should be trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of sexual abuse and family violence among students and refer affected students to appropriate support services for timely intervention.
5. Parents should be educated through seminars, workshops, and community awareness programmes on the adverse effects of sexual abuse and family violence on students' academic achievement and overall development.
6. Government agencies responsible for child welfare and protection should strengthen the enforcement of laws and policies aimed at preventing sexual abuse and family violence and ensuring that perpetrators are brought to justice.
7. Community leaders, religious organizations, and non-governmental organizations should intensify public enlightenment campaigns on child protection, family

harmony, and the importance of creating violence-free homes that support children's educational development.

8. Counselling psychologists and social workers should provide regular psychosocial support programmes and therapeutic interventions for students who have experienced sexual abuse and family violence to help them overcome trauma and improve their academic functioning.
9. The Ministry of Education should integrate child protection and abuse prevention education into the school curriculum to increase students' awareness of their rights, personal safety, and available support systems.
10. Schools should collaborate with parents, counsellors, healthcare professionals, and child protection agencies to develop comprehensive intervention programmes aimed at preventing sexual abuse and family violence and promoting students' academic success.
11. Government and educational stakeholders should establish school-based child protection committees to monitor, prevent, and respond effectively to cases of sexual abuse and family violence affecting students.

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