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Emotional isolation, degradation and exploitation as correlates of adolescents' self-concept in Nigeria

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Emotional maltreatment of children and adolescents is a subtype of abuse. The magnitude at which children and adolescents suffer from emotional maltreatment of isolation, degradation and exploitation has been found to be very startling. While studies have shown the impact of several dimensions of emotional abuse on human behaviours, there is lack of empirical information on the combined and separate effects of emotional isolation, degradation, and exploitation on the self-concept of adolescents. Hence, the study examined the combined and separate effects of these variables on self-concept of adolescents in Nigeria. Four hundred and eighty adolescents (215 males and 265 females) selected through purposive sampling technique from fifteen private secondary schools in Ota, Nigeria participated in this descriptive survey design of ex-post facto study. Questionnaires on Seven Dimensions Emotional Maltreatment at Home (QSDEM, $\alpha = 0.84$) and Adolescent Personal Data Inventory (APDI, $\alpha = 0.81$) were used to generate data. Three research questions were tested at 0.05 alpha level and stepwise multiple regression was employed for the analysis. Results indicated that the three independent variables jointly accounted for 26.2% of the variance in self-concept ($R^2 = .262$) and separately predicted self-concept at different degrees (Isolating $\beta = -.202$; $t = -4.441$; $p < 0.05$; Degrading $\beta = -.261$; $t = -5.354$; $p < 0.05$; Exploiting $\beta = -.169$; $t = -3.438$; $p > 0.05$). There was also negative but significant relationship between the predictors and the criterion variable. It is recommended that psychological intervention programmes currently available in schools should be enhanced to identify and treat psychological maltreatment.

Key words: Adolescents, abuse, emotional degradation, exploitation, isolation, Nigeria, self-concept.

INTRODUCTION

Abuse is a term used to denote wrong use of something, including human beings. Human abuses cover four major areas: physical, sexual, emotional and neglect (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 1997; Government of Alberta, 2007; Polat, 2001; The Free Dictionary, 2012; Tyler et al., 2006). Emotional abuse, which is the focal point of this paper, is a term that has diverse interpretations to different people and nations. For instance, it has been found that United Kingdom literature tends to employ emotional abuse while American

literature prefers to label it as psychological abuse (Cawson et al., 2000). The term has also been interchangeably used with such terms as psychological abuse, psychological aggression, mental abuse, emotional neglect and psychological maltreatment. Of all the types of human abuse, emotional abuse is recognized as silent epidemic because its often subtle nature goes unnoticed and untreated (Alkema, 2009). It appears to be the most prevalent form of child maltreatment (Tomison and Tucci, 1997) and it is also

commonly found in homes, schools and workplace (Goldsmith and Freyd, 2005; Keashly and Harvey, 2005; Jolly et al., 2009; World Health Organization, 2002). It is, however, unfortunate to know that child emotional maltreatment lagged behind compared to other forms of child abuse in research funding, publishing and practice as well as a social problem requiring attention (Behl et al., 2003; Egeland, 2009).

Emotional abuse has been described as more dangerous than other forms of abuse not only because it is the least visible but also because it has serious long-term consequences on children (Government of Alberta, 2007). It is recognized to be the core issue in all dimensions of child abuse and neglect and also exists independently or coexists with other forms of child abuse (Department of Health, Home Office and Department for Education and Employment, 1999; Tomison and Tucci, 1997). Emotional abuse has no consensus definition (Iwaniec, 1997; Stevens, 2006; Thompson and Kaplan, 1996) and research information about it is limited (Beswick, 2009; Geffner and Rossman, 1998; Tang, 1998; Thompson and Kaplan, 1996). There is lack of understanding of what constitutes emotional abuse in different cultural and societal contexts (Tang, 1998; Youssef and Atta, 1998). The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), according to Cawson et al. (2000) identifies three reasons why child abuse does not easily lend itself to definition. These are difficulty in identifying the boundaries between maltreatment and other forms of harm; variation in what is acceptable as treatment of children across cultures, countries and generations; and failure of policy and practice to develop a single definition of abuse or neglect which can be understood by all. This, notwithstanding, emotional abuse has been defined as any behaviour that affects the psychology of an individual by overpowering him/her and undermines the self-respect and independence of the sufferer (Sandhyarani, 2011).

Emotional maltreatment/abuse of children and adolescents has been in existence since antiquity up till this 21st century (Beswick, 2009; Mause, 1974). It has garnered considerable public debate and still remains researchers' area of focus. The identification, assessment, and treatment of emotional maltreatment are of ever-increasing importance to counsellors, psychologists, health professionals and even parents. Empirical information has shown that emotional abuse, especially among children, exists in developed and developing countries. In America, the rate of emotional abuse was estimated to be 103 per 1000 among 2–17 year olds (Finkelhor et al., 2005). A 2 year study of United States army cases of emotional maltreatment by Jellen et al. (2001) revealed that primary emotional abuse was found in 26% of cases while emotional abuse plus physical abuse or child neglect was discovered in 14% cases. In Nigeria, a study conducted among 1537 secondary students in Edo State by Okoza et al. (2011) revealed

prevalent diverse dimensions of emotional abuse among participants. Male students were found to have suffered the following dimensions of emotional abuse: terrorizing, isolating, ignoring, and verbal assaulting than their female counterparts. Similarly, it was found that senior students unlike their junior counterparts suffered more from emotional abuse dimensions of dominating and terrorizing. On the other hand, junior students experienced more emotional isolation than the senior students.

Studies on identification of emotional abuse have shown that it is multidimensional in nature. Warner and Hansen (1994) assert that identification and reporting of maltreatment are two critical steps in improving the health status of maltreated children. Garbarino et al. (1986) in Iwaniec (1997) and Tomison and Tucci (1997) proposed five categories of emotional abuse to include rejecting (behaviours which constitute abandonment of the child); isolating (behaviour which prevents the child from participating in social activities); terrorising (behaviour which threatens the child with severe punishment); ignoring (behaviour which makes the caregiver to be psychologically unavailable to the child); and corrupting (behaviour which encourages the child to develop antisocial behavioural patterns). Each of these has differential effects on children depending on their age and stage of development (Garbarino et al., 1986 cited in Tomison and Tucci, 1997).

There are six main categories of emotional maltreatment dimensions according to American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (1995) system of classification. These include spurning, terrorizing, isolating, exploiting/corrupting, denying emotional responsiveness and mental health/medical/ legal neglect. Gesinde (2011a), however, proposed seven categories of emotional maltreatment which are degrading, exploiting, corrupting, isolating, ignoring, rejecting and terrorizing. Karakus (2012) cited in Topbaş (2004), Tell et al. (2006) and Kara et al. (2004) have identified the following as dimensions of emotional abuse: rejection, humiliation, profanity, isolation, separation, intimidation, threatening, disregarding of emotional needs, expectancy of over-responsibility, discrimination among siblings, ignoring, not paying attention, ridiculing, nicknaming, exercising excess pressure and domination, enforcing dependency and over-protectiveness.

The magnitude at which children and adolescents suffer emotional maltreatment of isolation, degradation, and exploitation has been found to be very startling. 480 adolescents who participated in a study conducted by Gesinde (2011a) revealed that they suffered emotional isolation, degradation and exploitation from their parents respectively. Similarly, the result of a research conducted by Doyle (1997) among 504 children listed on the child protection register indicated that 54% have suffered emotional isolation while 53% have suffered emotional degradation from their caregivers. Finding from the research work indicated that most youths suffered from

more than one subtype of emotional abuse. However, attempt is made in this work to explicate emotional isolation, degradation and exploitation.

Emotional isolation is restraining or putting a limit to individual's ability to socialize with others. It has also been described as a state where a person is emotionally isolated though he may have a well social functioning (Kaplow et al., 2007). An individual who is emotionally isolated is confined to a specified physical environment and deliberately made to suffer mental disconnection or distance from others. Some of the parental behaviours that constitute emotional isolation of the child include preventing the child from having friends, especially the opposite sex; confining the child to a dark room for hours/days due to misbehaviour; hindering the child from attending outside functions/ceremonies. Research finding has shown that emotional isolation was the least common category of emotional abuse dimension with 13.6% of the children having this experience in a study by Trickett et al. (2009).

Emotional degradation of an individual occurs when his self-worth is reduced to nothingness and his dignity trampled upon. It aims at humiliating or destroying the self-concept of the victims. The damaging impact of emotional degradation is made poignant when Norishe (2008) remarks that degradation wears down someone's self-esteem, respect, worth to a point of vulnerability and reducing him or her to mass of self doubt and uncertainty. He added that it tears apart the delicate fibers that create the human ego.

Emotional degradation has been interchangeably used as emotional humiliation. It involves name-calling, insulting, yelling, and mimicking a person's disability among others. Studies conducted among parents have shown that they emotionally degraded or humiliated their children. For instance, Chen (2007)'s study on 185 parents of pupils showed that 13.5% of them revealed that they had humiliated their children in front of other people, 7.0% had said that they wished their children were never born or dead, and 14.1% had threatened to banish their children from the house. In an exploratory study of narratives, Hartling (2007) reports that respondents who completed humiliation inventory and scored high vividly described their painful experiences as if it happened yesterday whereas it may have occurred several years ago. Humiliation has been found to provoke social pain and makes victim to be prone to aggressive behaviour and vulnerable to depressive mood (Hartling, 2007). It threatens human survival by threatening one's vital connections (Miller, 1988); it acts as the strongest force that tends to create rifts between people and ruptures down relationships (Lindner, 2000). Parental or care givers' behaviours that constitute emotional degradation include exaggerating misbehaviours of the child; exposing flaws or weaknesses of the child to several people; lying against the child in the presence of others.

Unlike emotional isolation and degradation, emotional

exploitation involves manipulating child's activities or forcing the child to carry out certain activities that would benefit the manipulator. American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging (2007) submits that exploitation is "the unjust or improper use of another person or another person's resources for one's own profit or advantage". In most cases, the child performs functions that are beyond his capabilities or forbidden by laws of the land. Generally speaking, child exploitation refers to the engagement of child in work or other activities which others will benefit from. These include, but are not limited to, child labour and child prostitution. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, or spiritual, moral or social-emotional development (Krug et al., 2002). Newton (2001) confirms this when he states that child exploitation is a systematic process of employing children to work with little or no compensation and without contemplation for their safety and health. Vohs and Baumeister (2007) proposed that when decisions culminated into taking advantage of other people, it tends to cause a specific (an aversive) emotional response that will affect cognition and emotion. The aversive reaction tends to arouse counterfactual ruminations that may intensify sugrophobia but could also aid in extracting valuable lessons. Parental or care givers' behaviours that constitute emotional exploitation include preventing the child to cry when physically or verbally assaulted; forcing the child to care for siblings; blaming the child for offence not committed. Alexander (2008) is of the view that people's emotions are unquestionably being exploited by some other people out there. In a study of 480 adolescents in Nigeria, participants confirmed that they suffered emotional exploitation from their parents at home with mean rating of 8.56 and SD of 1.99 (Gesinde, 2011a).

Generally, the effects of emotional abuse depend on the dimensions, nature and rigorousness of the abuse. Different dimensions of maltreatment have been found to emerge as predictors of emotional adjustment (Allen, 2008). Stavrianos et al. (2011) are of the view that emotional maltreatment is likely to lead to health risk behaviours and life-long socio-cognitive impairments. Logistic regression analyses have also indicated that school absenteeism, deliberate self-harm, substance use and family conflict were associated with emotional abuse (Perera et al., 2009). Specifically, the predictive ability of caregivers' emotional terrorizing, degradation, ignoring, and isolating on anxiety, depression, somatic complaints, and borderline personality disorder (BPD) has been established in a study of 256 university students by Allen (2008). The result of the study showed that terrorizing predicted anxiety and somatic complaints, ignoring predicted depression and BPD, while degradation predicted features of BPD only. However, quite a number of studies have established a causal relationship between emotional abuse and self-concept development (Government of Alberta, 2007; Romeo, 2000; Shumba, 2002;

Qates et al., 1985).

In fact, emotional abuse is defined by some scholars from the point of view of its influence on self-concept/esteem of an individual. For instance, Loring (1994) submits that emotional abuse is ongoing processes in which one individual not only systematically diminishes and destroys the inner self of another but also constantly belittles the essential ideas, feelings, perceptions, and personality characteristics of such individual. Emotional abuse has also been defined as the systematic, patterned and chronic abuse that is used by a perpetrator to lower a victim's sense of self, self-worth and power (Mezey et al., 2002 in Court Watch, 2007). It has also been explained to be any behaviour that affects the psychology of an individual by overpowering him/her and undermines the self-respect and independence of the sufferer (Sandhyarani, 2011). Self-concept/esteem is imperative for normal intellectual, biological and social growth. Children, who are abused, according to Perry (2002), are at the risk of witnessing the following behavioural problems: low self-esteem, depression, drug/alcohol dependence, and increased potential for child abuse as a parent. Emotional abuse can deteriorate self-esteem and affect students' psychological development (Nesbit and Philpott, 2002). Survey study of 2,000 senior secondary two (SSII) students in Cross River State, Nigeria by Ajake et al. (2011) showed that emotional abuse has a significant negative influence on the students' five dimensions of self-concept (social-self, physical-self, moral-self, family-self and financial self-concept respectively). When emotionally abused children were compared with non-abused children, Qates et al. (1985) found that the emotionally abused children saw themselves as having significantly fewer friends, they played with friends less often, less ambitious with regard to the sort of occupation they would like as adults and were significantly lower in self-concept on the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale.

Self-concept is synonymously known as self-identity and self-perception. It covers academic and non academic endeavours in life. Self-concept model has three interwoven parts namely self-esteem, self-stability, and self-efficacy. Self-esteem focuses on one's judgement about his self worth, stability focuses on how enduring is one's self-concept while self-efficacy emphasises confidence repose in self (Demidenko et al., 2010). Although controversies surround the onset of self-concept among scholars it is universally accepted that it is linked with emotional development. Cluff (2005) observes that most theories on child development agree that a link exists between child development and emotional levels. The relationship between emotional development and self-concept commences from childhood phase of life. Purkey (1988) affirms that nobody is born with self-concept but gradually develops it in the early months of life. He reiterates that it is learned, organized, dynamic and is shaped and reshaped through repeated perceived

experiences with others. Ashiabi (2000) points out that for emotional development to take place, relationship with caregivers and peers is necessary because it provides deferring experiences and serves disparate functions. He further observes that when a child experience insecure relationship with caregivers it tends to lead to negative emotions.

Statement of the Problem

It has been established through empirical study that three dimensions exist among children and adolescents and have been found to impact their self-concept (Ajake et al., 2011; Brunning (2012). They are the most common dimensions of emotional abuse among adolescents and they suffer from them in the following order: isolation, degradation and exploitation (Gesinde, 2011a). If these three dimensions of psychological abuse exist and have been found to influence self-concept there is the need to provide empirical information on their combined and separate effects on self-concept of adolescents. Existing studies on these dimensions of emotional abuse showed that researchers have studied them together with other emotional abuse dimensions such as emotional rejection, corruption, ignoring. The effect of the three dimensions combined together on self-concept of adolescents has not been established by any empirical study to the best of the knowledge of this researcher. Similarly too, the significant relationship that exists among emotional isolation, degradation and exploitation and self-concept is yet to be empirically explored. Consequently, this present study, therefore, investigates the effect of these variables on the self-concept of school adolescents in Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria. The study is guided by the following research questions:

- (i) What is the combined effect of emotional isolation, degradation and exploitation on the self-concept of the adolescents?
- (ii) What is the separate effect of emotional isolation, degradation and exploitation on adolescents' self-concept?
- (iii) What type of significant relationship exists among emotional isolation, degradation exploitation and self-concept?

METHODS

Four hundred and eighty adolescent students selected through purposive sampling technique from fifteen private secondary schools in Ota, Nigeria participated in this descriptive survey design of ex-post facto. The demographic information of the participants indicated that there were 215 males and 265 females with age range of 11-18 years and mean age of 14.61. A total of 421 participants were from monogamous family while only 59 participants were from polygamous family. Purposive sampling was employed

Table 1. Model summary of stepwise multiple regression analysis and analysis of the variance of the contribution of emotional isolation, degradation and exploitation to adolescents' self concept.

Model	Regression	Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
A	R= .391	Regression	6318.923	1	6318.923	86.141	.000
	R ² =.153	Residual	35064.068	478	73.356		
	R ² (adj)=.151	Total	41382.992	479			
B	R=.494	Regression	10083.014	2	5041.507	76.831	.000
	R ² =.244	Residual	31299.977	477	65.618		
	R ² (adj)=.240	Total	41382.992	479			
C	R=.512	Regression	10841.536	3	3613.845	56.323	.000
	R ² =.262	Residual	30541.455	476	64.163		
	R ² (adj)=.257	Total	41382.992	479			

a Predictors: (constant), isolating; b: predictors (constant), isolating, degrading; c: predictors (constant), isolating, degrading, exploiting; d: dependent variable: self-concept.

because only students who indicated that they are living with their biological parents were allowed to participate in the study. Gesinde (2011a) Questionnaire on Seven Dimensions of Emotional Maltreatment at Home (QSDEMH) and Akinboye's (1977) Adolescent Personal Data Inventory (APDI) were the two instruments used for data generation. QSDEMH is sub-categorized into two: demographic information and seven items each on emotional dimensions of degrading, exploiting, corrupting, isolating, ignoring, rejecting, and terrorizing. The items on isolation (such as my parents prevented me from having friends especially the opposite sex and I have been confined to a dark room for hours by my parents), degradation (such as my parents used parts of my body to abuse me, such as labelling me big head/eyes and my parents used to exaggerate my misbehaviours) and exploitation (such as my parents blamed me for their mistakes and my parents used to exaggerate my misbehaviours) were used for the purpose of this study. The items were on four point Likert rating scale of Very often (4); Often (3); Sometimes (2); Never (1). The split-half reliability paradigm of QSDEMH was found to be 0.84.

The APDI has 10 sections (A-J). Hence, 10 inventories exist in a test folder of APDI. The inventories are sections A (Self-concept); B (Study behaviour); C (Behavioural health attributes); D (Psychopathology); E (Career aspirations); F (Reproductive behaviour); G (Ethical behaviour); H (Interests); I (Creative Thinking Patterns); and J (Personal-social behaviour characteristics of adolescents). The self-concept subscale of APDI was used for this study. It has 30 items in 5 Likert type scale format ranging from "least like me 1 2 3 4 5 most like me". The internal consistency reliability of the APDI yielded 0.87 and test-retest reliability was found to be 0.93. Examples of items on the self-concept section are: 'my life has great value, I often feel lonely, I like to be myself always'. Permission was taken from the principals of the school before the study was conducted. Ten research assistants assisted the researcher in the administration of the instruments and these were collected from the participants on the day of administration. Stepwise multiple regression and correlation coefficient were used to analyse the three research questions set to guide the study at 0.05 alpha.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the contribution of the three independent

variables to the dependent variable. When the first variable (Isolation) was entered into the regression model a significant contribution was shown ($R = .391$; $R^2 = .153$; $F_{(1, 478)} = 86.141$; $p < .05$). This implies that isolation was able to explain 15.3% of the variance in adolescent self-concept. When the second variable (Degradation) was entered into the regression model the prediction level improved ($R = .494$; $R^2 = .244$; $F_{(2, 477)} = 76.831$; $p < .05$). Degradation was able to contribute 9.1% to the prediction while the addition of isolation and degradation were able to explain 24.4% of variance in adolescent self-concept. The addition of the third variable (exploitation) to the regression model showed a significant contribution ($R = .512$; $R^2 = .262$; $F_{(3, 476)} = 64.163$; $p < .05$). Hence, emotional exploitation has contributed 1.8% to the prediction of the dependent variable while the three variables put together could only explain 26.2% of the variation in adolescents' self-concept.

Table 2 tested the regression weights of the independent variables. It was evident from the table that emotional isolation was the most potent predictor of adolescents' self-concept ($\beta = -1.415$; $t = -9.281$; $p < .05$). This was followed by degradation ($\beta = -1.049$; $t = -7.574$; $p < .05$) and exploitation ($\beta = -.789$; $t = -3.438$; $p < .05$) respectively.

Table 3 presented the relationship among the variables. It is evident from the analysis that inverse relationship exists between the predictors and the criterion variable. Out of the predictor variables, degrading negatively correlated most with self-concept while relationship between isolation and self-concept was weak.

DISCUSSION

This study was designed to examine the independent and joint contributions of emotional isolation, degradation and

Table 2. Testing the regression weights of emotional isolation, degradation and exploitation in predicting self-concept.

Model	Unstandardized coefficient		Standard coefficient	T	Sig
	B	Standard error	Beta		
A	-1.415	.152	-.391	-9.281	.000
B	-1.049	.138	-.335	-7.574	.000
C	-.789	.229	-.169	-3.438	.001
Constant	106.495	1.518		70.146	.000

A: Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Isolating; b: Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Isolating, Degrading; c: Dependent Variable: Self-concept.

Table 3. Means, standard deviations and intercorrelations among predictors and self-concept.

	Variables			
	Degradation	Exploitation	Isolation	Self-concept
1. Degradation	1.000			
2. Exploitation	.550	1.000		
3. Isolation	.433	.499	1.000	
4. Self-concept	-.441	-.403	-.391	1.000
Mean	9.58	8.56	49.62	92.88
S.D	2.97	1.99	2.57	9.29

* $p < .05$

exploitation on the self-concept of adolescents in Ota, Nigeria. The analysis of the data confirmed that the variables jointly explained more than 26% of the variation in adolescents' self concept. This result lends credence to studies and postulations that have established causal relationship between self-concept and emotional abuse (Government of Alberta, 2007; Loring, 1994; Karakuş, 2012; Shumba, 2002;). Gesinde's (2011a) study has shown that adolescents suffered from emotional isolation, degradation, and exploitation from their parents/caregivers. Out of the seven dimensions of emotional abuse considered in the study, emotional isolation tops the list of emotional abuse that the participants have suffered from while degradation and exploitation occupied the second and third positions respectively. Besides, quite a number of scholars perceived self-concept as the repercussion for emotional maltreatment. The combined effect of physical, emotional and sexual abuses in a study conducted by Karakus (2012) indicated a joint effect of 12.9% on self-esteem and emotional abuse was the most potent predictor ($\beta = .283$, $p < .001$). Emotional isolation and exploitation have been found to be co-occurring among young adolescents (Trickett et al., 2009). Organizational Change Solutions (2010) remark that emotional abuse distorts what normality looks like in life. Hence, it was observed that when an individual is emotionally abused instead of developing normal pathways of experience that provides a healthy baseline of self-concept and healthy patterns of social

identification in relation to others, an individual emotions and judgement rather become blurred by the abuse and alter how self is perceived.

It is therefore not surprising that the combination of emotional isolation, degradation, and exploitation could jointly contribute 26% to the prediction of self-concept. It is, however, interesting to note that the three variables are not adequate to explain the entire variations in adolescents' concept. Specifically, about 74% of the variations could only be explained by other variables not given considerations in this study. One would have expected that the impact would be greater than this considering the established causal relationship between emotional abuse and self-concept development that have been reported in the literature. The low impact may be as a result of the fact that only three dimensions of emotional abuse were combined in this study. It is probable that the more the number of emotional maltreatment dimensions the higher the effect on self-concept of the adolescents. The low impact might also be because students rarely identified themselves as being emotionally abused (Goldsmith and Freyd, 2005).

It is evident from the analysis of the second research question that emotional isolation, degradation, and exploitation predicted self-concept at diverse degrees. This confirms Allen (2008) and Garbarino et al. 1986 (as cited in Tomison and Tucci, 1997) reports that different dimensions of maltreatment have been found to emerge as predictors of emotional adjustment. English et al.

(2005) also affirm from their study that maltreatment dimensions have distinct effects on child functioning while Warner and Hansen (1994) report that diverse dimensions of emotional abuse were significant predictors of different outcome.

Emotional isolation was found to be the most potent predictor of self-concept out of the three dimensions of emotional abuse. Emotional isolation has been found to be the most common dimension of abuse and best predictor of psychological maltreatment among adolescents in Nigeria when seven dimensions of emotional maltreatment were investigated by Gesinde (2011a, b). On the other hand, it was the least common dimension of emotional abuse when compared with spurning, exploiting/corrupting in a study carried out by Trickett et al. (2009). Studies which have investigated relationship between isolation and self-concept have revealed that children who were isolated by their classmates did not have low self-concept (Rudner *et al.*, 1976). The inter-correlation that existed among the variables did not come as a surprise. This is because dimensions of child maltreatment have been found to be interrelated and interacted in the determination of outcome (Warne and Hansen, 1994). However, it is evident from this study that the predictor variables are moving in the opposite direction of the criterion variable. As the predictor variables increase so also the criterion variable decreases and vice versa.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Emotional abuse of isolation, degradation and exploitation is a vital health and psychological issue that requires considerable attention of parents, teachers, government and non-government agencies. It has significant impacts on several aspects of adolescents' life of which self-concept occupies an important position. The results of this study have established the fact that emotional isolation, degradation, and exploitation could explain the variation in adolescents' self-concept. Consequently, psychological intervention programmes currently available in schools should be enhanced to properly assess and treat adolescents whose self-concept has been affected by exposure to diverse dimensions of emotional abuse. Similarly, parents, teachers, guardian should be made to understand the negative impact of isolation, degradation and exploitation on the self-concept of adolescents. The fact that the three variables could explain more than 26% implies that they should be given adequate consideration in any attempt to improve the self-concept of the adolescents. Further researches should also be conducted to fish out other variables or factors predicting the self-concept of the adolescents.

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