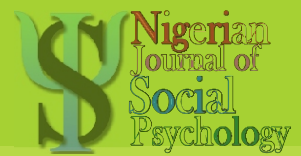


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Human Violence on Animals, a Possible Precursor to Child Antisocial Personality Disorder (CAPD), the Implication for Social Work Education in Nigeria – a study of Enugu State.

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Abstract

There is usually a link between mental health and the health of animal and animal companionship because animal forms part of the biopsychosocial environment of man. The aim of veterinary social work, therefore, is to care for people as they traverse the habitually difficult choices needed to care for animals and their survival, man's sanity, and survival for food safety and environmental protection; hence man's violence to animals is a global phenomenon sometimes has a direct effect on the health and welfare of man. This violence which can be either passive or active and in some cases a combination of both brings with it unimaginable pain, and discomfort not only to the animals but to other human beings who witness these atrocious acts to these animals. Violence, especially in a domestic environment directed towards animals might cause varying degree of multiplier effects for children if they are often exposed to it. Animal violence is one of the three adolescent behaviors called the "homicidal triad" (Enuresis, animal violence, and fire-setting) which may lead to child anti-social personality disorder (CAPD) in children. This study explored human violence on animals, a possible precursor to child antisocial personality disorder (CAPD) in Enugu State, Nigeria. Sixty respondents, including 6 Veterinary Desk Officers, 6 social workers and 48 community people, across six local government areas participated in the study. Three different categories of FGDs (community people in each of the local government area, veterinary desk officers and social workers) were used to generate data from the respondents. Findings show that children developed psychological complications as a result of human violence to animals. These psychological complications include: anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and violent behaviours towards animals, other children and family members. The findings of this study have implications for social work education in Nigeria and therefore advocated for the national universities commission (NUC) in Nigeria to introduce veterinary social work in Nigeria's social work benchmark academic standard (BMAS) curriculum for Social work education in Nigerian universities and also emphasizes the need to teach about the prominence of better treatment of animals in general knowledge classes of secondary schools in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Animal violence, food safety, environmental protection, homicidal triad, anti-social personality disorder.*

INTRODUCTION

Human violence to animal is a global phenomenon (Arluke, Levin and Ascione, 1999) as different countries across the world engage in one form of animal cruelty or the other. Human violence to animals is of great consequences to both the animals and human beings who witness how the animals are maltreated. For the animals, they experience unimaginable pains, discomfort and in extreme cases death. For the human beings, some pass through emotional and psychological pains as they watch these animals pass through excruciating pains (Mogbo, Oduah, Okeke, Ufele and Nwankwo, 2013). Apart from the emotional and psychological pains some humans pass through as a result of animal cruelty, perpetrators of extreme violence to other human beings have been reported to invariably have links with abusing animals (Cohen, 1996). More so, Kaufman, Hilliker and Daleiden, (1996) in Scott (2018) reported that children who witness violence to animals are 3-8 times more likely to abuse animals while children who engage in animal cruelty are more likely to abuse in the community, at school, and in the family with serious implications on their antisocial personality disorder which they learn from what happens in their environment (McDonald et al. 2015; Degue and Dilillo, 2009). This ill treatment to animals calls for the attention of everyone but mostly mental health professionals, law enforcement and policy makers in taking decisive actions against individuals who perpetrate acts of cruelty against animals (Flynn, 2000). Animal cruelty as established earlier does not only affect only animals but humans. Hence, our response to bringing an end to this obnoxious practice must be a united action involving multi-disciplinary teams including social workers.

Violence to animals in some form, is illegal in every state (Risley-Curtiss, 2010). Sadly, in Nigeria the facts on ground suggest that there is nothing illegal regarding animal cruelty as many animals suffer exploitation and neglect on daily basis without prosecution of perpetrators of this inhuman treatments to animals. This may not be unconnected to lack of importance attached to animal welfare and wellbeing within the Nigerian context (Mogbo, Oduah, Okeke, Ufele and Nwankwo, 2013). According to Novello, Shosky and Froehkle (1992) animal treatment and its effective control has important implications for law enforcement, social services and public health providers. The importance of animal to human existence cannot be over-emphasize. It is a well-established fact that human beings sometimes find companion in some animals which they referred as pets but most often, these animals are uncared for, neglected and abused at any slightest provocation by their owners within Enugu state, Nigeria. All these bring to bear the intervening roles of social work alongside other professions in promoting animal rights and welfare.

However, the big question bordering discerning minds is what concerns social workers with animal rights and wellbeing considering that social work is blinkered to focus mainly on humans (Ryan, 2011). Although human welfare is paramount above all else in social work context; being human centered profession allows social workers to rationalize their secondary consideration for animal welfare while exploring the ecological perspective or model (Walker, Aimers and Perry, 2016). It is based on this premise that the intervening roles of social workers in addressing animal cruelty in Enugu state, Nigeria becomes germane. To achieve this, this study explored the numerous forms of human violence to animals and the effects these forms of human violence to animals will have on the child antisocial personality disorder in Enugu state.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area

The study area is Enugu State. The state is located in the southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Enugu State had a population of 3,267,837 according to the 2006 national census. With a 3.0 percent annual growth rate, the population of the state as at 2021 when the study was conducted stood at 5,228,539.

Sampling procedure

Sixty respondents, including six (6) Veterinary Desk Officers, six (6) social workers and forty eight (48) community people, participated in the study. Using a purposive sampling technique, the researchers selected six local government areas (two each from the three senatorial district) in Enugu State. To give an urban/rural blend to the study, one urban and one rural local government were chosen from each senatorial district. With the help of community leaders in each local government, 8 persons were mobilized based on their willingness to participate in the focus group discussion for each local government area that was selected. Veterinary desk officers and social workers were recruited based on their affiliations with the local government areas selected.

Data collection

Discussion sessions were conducted in the secretariats of the six local government areas. Before starting the discussion sessions, the researchers read the aims of the research to the respondents which they indicated full understanding and gave their oral consent. The discussions comprised of three different categories of FGDs (community people in each of the local government area, veterinary desk officers and social workers). Based on the permission obtained from the respondents, discussions were recorded with a tape recorder and an android phone, while one of the researchers took notes. Given the mixed lingua make-up of the researchers, those who understand and speak Igbo fluently were used as FGD facilitators and note takers since Igbo language was used alongside the English language to communicate while those who does not fluently understand Igbo language were used as tape recorders. The research instruments (FGD guides) for the study were developed by the researchers.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected were transcribed in the English language by an expert in the Department of Linguistics, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. The transcribed discussions were compared with the notes taken, to ensure that no response was lost. The transcribed data were arranged in themes. The rationale behind the use of themes was to help with classifying responses. Themes were collectively developed after we modified the research questions as a result of experiences from the field. This alludes to grounded theory in research (Barbie, 2010) and the results of the themes developed are presented below.

RESULTS

Our conversation with the respondents centered centered on human violence on animals as precursor to child antisocial personality disorder

Knowledge on human violence on animals

The respondents were asked to express their views on their understanding of human violence on animals. The respondents noted that testing, neglect, starvation, human predation, exploitation, abuse, animal fighting, hitting, not providing shelter, etc. are some of the human violence on animals. To buttress these points, the respondents reacted differently while expressing their views on human violence on animals. One of the respondents stated:

“I know that in different laboratories across the world, many animals are being used for experimental purposes. Some of them are infected with different diseases in a bid to monitor the progression of such diseases and possibly find a cure to such disease(s) while some may survive after adequate treatment must have been administered, majority don't survive due to either under dose, overdose and in some cases non-treatment of these animals. That is why I think acts such as these constitute human violence to animals because human beings are the ones conducting these tests on animals.”

Another respondent justifying why neglect and starvation are forms of human violence to animal declared,

“There are people who keep animals without having the intention of taking good care of these animals believing that animals have no needs and therefore treating the animals anyhow. I know those who have cats, dogs and different species of birds and other animals as pet but do not feed them adequately, provide decent accommodation for them or even try to find out the health conditions of these animals. In some cases, you see these pets under harsh sun, cold weather and going to dump sites to feed.”

Another respondent sharing her experience on knowledge of human violence to animals made reference to different species of animal which are killed and consumed as meat on daily basis. She puts her experience this way,

“On daily basis, human beings eat animals as special delicacy(ies). These animals that are used as meat for human consumption are killed in the most gruesome manner. So while these animals are consumed by humans because of their nutritional values, the point need to be made that these animals that are killed and predated upon have the rights to exist and survive. Sometimes, these animals are killed in the presence of other animals with devastating effects on other animals which cannot be measured.”

Other human violence against animal include: exploitation, abuse, animal fighting and hitting. One of the respondents succinctly put it this way:

“Animals undergo different exploitations in the hands of humans or their owners. There are cases of animal rape, use of animals as workforce where they are over labored and situations where animals are arranged to fight each other just for watching pleasure of humans. Another respondent queried “what about situation where animals for examples dogs are used to hunt other animals. This is really creating enmity between animals. Or a situation where humans inflict physical harm to animals through beating, hitting and other corporal punishments that can result in permanent injuries to these animals? These

abusive and exploitative tendencies impact negatively to these animals and surely constitute human violence to animals and should not be allowed or encouraged in 21st century.

CAUSES OF HUMAN VIOLENCE ON ANIMALS

On the causes of human violence on animals, the respondents agreed that the socialization process across all cultures, is one of the reasons human violence to animals is on the increase. To buttress these points, one of the respondents stated:

“Across all cultures and tradition, consumption of animals is a major part of meal and because meal is a regular occurrence in our daily life, it means these animals have to be killed on regular basis before they are prepared as meal and only God knows the number of animals that are being slaughtered on daily basis to provide food for man.

Another respondent expressed his opinion this way:

“A look at some traditional feasts or religious festivals showed that killing of animal is pre-requisite for celebrating such feasts or festivals. Take the killing of cows for chieftaincy titles or even the killing of ram for Salah celebration they are all examples of acts that are handed over from generation to generation spanning a long period of time. In the same vein, celebrations such as marriages, burials, house warming, birthdays and lots more are associated with slaughtering of different species of animals and as you know killing of animals is a form of human violence to animals.

Other respondents believed that misinterpretation of the biblical injunction is one of the major cause of human violence to animals, going biblical, one of the respondents declared;

“you know in the book of Genesis, God gave man dominion over animals and all the creatures of the earth and enjoined man to feed from the animal. This section of the bible has been mis-interpreted by many people to mean that God gave man the power to do with other creatures as they wish without any repercussion and that is why cruelty to animals and other creatures are a daily occurrence among the people as they can do with animals as they please since God have given man injunction to do so.”

Another respondent emphasized:

“We are very religious in this part of the country and anything that comes as a religious directive is followed to the latter. The incident where Peter was directed in a trance to kill and eat animals in the Acts of the Apostle no doubt contributes immensely to why killing of animals which is a form of human violence to animal is seen as a norm. Consequently, no one blinks an eye when animals are killed or subjected to inhuman treatment.”

Serious lapses in prosecuting those who violate animals, poverty and ignorance of the effects of human violence on animals are other reasons identified by respondents as causes of human violence to animals. According to a respondent who berated government weakness in prosecuting animal violators, she queried,

“Why will human violence to animal stop when there is no will power to prosecute offenders? Granted that animals are part of human food but does it mean that they should be killed in the most gruesome manner? In advanced countries it is hard to see animal being killed in the presence of other animals but we see animals being slaughtered on daily basis in front other animals. What about those who rear animals or use them as pets but allows them to roam the street and feed on dump sites or peoples farm/means of livelihood thereby making these animals to constitute nuisance and endangers their life to those they might destroy their means of livelihood. So until government put appropriate legislation in place as regards best practices in keeping and begin to prosecute those who go contrary to these provisions, human violence to animals will have to live with us for a long time to come.”

Another respondent puts his thought this way,

“There is so much ignorance in this part of the world. The truth is that many people don’t even know that violence against animals also have devastating effects on human life. There are those who cannot withstand the sight of a blood be it human or other animals. Also, witnessing or perpetrating violence against animals makes it very easy for one to perpetrate violence against fellow human beings. It is just like watching violent films, the more you watch violent films, the more you lose human emotion/sympathy and begin to practice those violent scenes you had watched earlier. So until we begin to put into our consciousness that human violence to animal have devastating effects on wellbeing of human beings, we will not make headway in curtailing the problem.”

He continued,

“let me also talk about poverty. So many people are keeping pets which they cannot afford to maintain. There is hunger in the land. Very few populations can feed adequately not talk of extra burden of caring for a pet. Keeping pet(s) consume a whole lot of resources. You need to provide shelter, feeding, medical care and other sundry for the wellbeing of such animal(s). So if you can barely feed, how can you provide for the needs of the animal in your care? Of course, the animals will be neglected and subjected to varying degrees of abuse(s).”

EFFECTS OF HUMAN VIOLENCE ON ANIMALS

The respondents agreed that there are grave consequences associated with human violence to animals. These consequences associated with human violence to animals include: life threatening injury, death, extinction of some species of animals and emotional suffering. One of the respondents stated:

“human violence to animals can be very devastating both to the animals and others within the ecosystem. For example, violence to animal can lead to permanent injury, life threatening injuries and in some cases death of these animals. Whichever form these

consequences take, the truth is that they contribute immensely to emotional suffering of the animals and human beings around.”

Another respondent reacted this way:

“As a young person, there are animals we used to see on regular basis. These animals include: monkey, some species of snakes, birds and other mammals. These animals are no longer as common as we used to see them before because some of them have been killed and used as meat while others like snakes which are sometimes tagged dangerous are killed and sometimes eaten or buried because of the belief that their existence pose danger to human existence. As a result, population of such animals have decreased drastically while others have gone into complete extinction and we may not have opportunity of seeing them again except in books, television or we travel to where they are kept in zoo.”

To some respondents, they believe that a major consequence of human violence to animals is in the area of imbalance in the ecosystem. They argued that the existence of both humans, animals, plants and other organisms in the ecosystem is for a purpose. Consequently, when any of the components is deliberately or unduly harmed leading to depopulation of such component; the ecosystem suffers. One of the respondents succinctly puts it this way:

“It is obvious that some animals predate over animals and use them as food. Examples are lion that feed on other animals or vultures that feed on carcass of dead animals, acts of this nature safeguards the ecosystem and sustenance of various species. However, a situation where humans slaughter huge number of animals for meat cause immense suffering to ecosystem and threatens the survival of the ecosystem”

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN VIOLENCE ON ANIMALS AND CHILD ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY DISORDER.

The respondents believed that relationship exists between human violence and child antisocial personality disorder. These relationships can be found in psychological complications for the child. The respondents unanimously agreed that children who witness human violence to animals can develop psychological complications which may be detrimental to the growth and over all development of such children. These psychological complications according to the respondents include: anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and violent behaviours towards animals, other children and family members. Going philosophical, one of the respondents opined;

“You know human beings especially children learn a lot through observation. As they watch as violence are meted on these animals, they too may feel the impact and begin to imagine what will be their fate if such violence is extended to them. Based on how they see the animals react, they may begin to develop unhealthy defense mechanisms unconsciously such as being hostile to those around them as a means to escape being victim of violence. For others they may experience depression, anxiety, etc. as they try to make sense out of the violence the animals are made to pass through.

Another respondent has this to say:

“When children reminisce on the human violence against animals’ years or months after the incident, they may feel the pain(s) fresh again. The truth is that trauma is trauma and it does not matter how long the event had taken place. So whether it is human being or animal that pass through trauma, the children who watch the scene(s) have the tendency of developing post-traumatic stress disorder. Situations like this can make such children to withdraw from what is happening around them or they may develop anti-social behaviours that may be inimical to their development.”

DISCUSSION

Human violence to animals makes both humans and animals feel pain and experience distress. A correlation has now been established between animal abuse, family violence, and other forms of community violence. Child and animal protection professionals have established the connection and recognize that both child and animal abuse are linked in a self-perpetuating cycle of violence (American Humane, 2022). The reason for this being that individuals who witness abuse or other violence become desensitized to it (Baldry, 2005; McEwen, Moffitt and Arseneault, 2014).

The researchers examined human violence on animals as possible precursor to child antisocial personality disorder. In trying to explore how human violence on animals can contribute to child antisocial personality disorder various themes were developed to aid in unraveling the subject matter. The themes developed were: knowledge on human violence on animals, causes of human violence on animals, effects of human violence on animals and relationship between human violence on animals and child antisocial personality disorder. The essence is to provide a sound footing where issues concerning human violence on animals and how it can lead to child antisocial personality disorder will be fully explored.

On knowledge about human violence on animals, the participants demonstrated that various acts such as using animals for testing or experimentation, as some of the human violence on animals. The submissions made by the respondents is in line with the report of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animal ([PETA], 2002) which submitted that over 100 million animals are killed in U.S. laboratories for biology lessons, medical training, curiosity-driven experimentation, chemical, drug, food, and cosmetics testing each year. Another human violence on animals according to the respondents is neglect. This neglect includes not feeding the animals, lack of shelter and other care(s) such as medical needed by the animals. Neglect which is different from active cruelty can result in just as much pain and suffering for such animal (Human League, 2021). Others include: exploitation, abuse, confinement, animal fighting and hitting. These forms of violence according to Human League (2021) cause animals to suffer complex emotions, denies them the opportunity to engage in natural behaviors or live in their natural environments and social groups and in some cases death.

Socialization process across all cultures was identified as one of the major causes of human violence on animals. Because socialization is what happened over time and is transferred from one generation to the other, it kind of legitimized human violence on animal. The implication

is people now see killing of animals and other forms of violence against animals as a norm. Criminal psychologists acknowledge that participating in or viewing acts of repeated cruelty towards animals desensitizes both the perpetrator and the spectator (Baldry, 2005; McEwen, 2014). So as long as we continue to enjoy the luxury of meat in our meals as well as attach killings of animals to some of our religious celebrations and traditional rituals, human violence on animals will not abate. Other causes of human violence on animals such as lapses in prosecuting those who violates animals, poverty, ignorance, etc. help make the point that people need to be adequately informed and prepared before they begin to take animals either as pets or companion.

On the conversation around effects of human violence on animals, the participants were of the opinion that life threatening injury, death, imbalance in the ecosystem, extinction of some species of animals and emotional suffering are some of the consequences of human violence on animals. While some of these consequences such as death and physical injuries can be measured, emotional suffering cannot be measured. Animals are sentient and capable of complex emotions and suffering but humans often ignore this (PETA, 2021). Consequently, humans use animals for whatsoever purposes, without putting into consideration the impact on the animals' emotions.

Finally, it was established that relationship exists between human violence on animals and child antisocial personality disorder. Anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and violent behaviours towards animals, other children and family members are linked with children who witness human violence on animals. Locke (1692) in Haisal (1998) once wrote that children tormenting and killing beasts, will, by degrees, harden their minds even towards fellow humans; and they who delight in the suffering and destruction of lesser species, will not be certain to be very kind to those of their own type." Animal cruelty destroys respect for life, and children who witness animal abuse are at a greater risk of becoming abusers themselves (McDonald et al. 2015; Degue and Dilillo, 2009).

IMPLICATION TO SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

The findings from this study have significant implications for social work education in Nigeria. One of such implication is the need for social work educators to inculcate veterinary education into the social work curriculum. This can be achieved by the national universities commission (NUC) through introduction of veterinary social work into the Nigeria's social work benchmark academic standard (BMAS). This became imperative considering the findings of the study which placed lack of knowledge at the root of causes and effects of human violence on animal. Consequently, inculcating veterinary social work into social work curriculum will bridge the knowledge gap by the social workers and place them in a better position to advocate against human violence on animals which has been found to impact seriously on child antisocial personality disorder.

Another implication of this study to social work educators is the need for them to mainstream the relationship between human violence on animals and child antisocial personality disorder into their programmes. As educators, they are not confined only to teaching and research; rather they engage in community services and other interventions such as capacity building, child

protection and safety, community mobilization among other social work interventions. All these programmes and interventions provide opportunities for them to discuss and sensitize their target audience on the dangers of human violence on animals especially as it concerns child antisocial personality disorder. As an offshoot to this, they can also emphasize the need to teach about the prominence of better treatment of animals in general knowledge classes of secondary schools in Nigeria in order to raise children who are animal friendly.

Finally, as educators who are deeply engaged in research; Nigerian social work educators have the onerous responsibility to look at the peculiarity of human violence on animals from different perspectives (cultural, traditional, religious, ethnic, etc.) and come out with indigenous approach that will address such violence. This indigenous approach will help in developing policies that determine what constitute human violence on animals in our setting instead of adapting and implementing what is alien to us which may constitute why there is weak implementation in prosecuting those who commit violence against animals.

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