Exploring the Violence Cycle: A Case on Children Exposed to Violent Conflict Becoming Actual Violent Conflict Perpetrators

Musa, Sallek Yaks[*]
Department of Criminology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Northampton, United Kingdom
* E-mail of the corresponding author: ladsadhu@yahoo.com

Abstract

In their everyday live, children are exposed to several violent encounters in schools, at home or their community at large. Studies reports that children exposed to instances of domestic violence at home and in schools stand high chances of becoming violent. Whereas several such researches have been conducted erstwhile across the globe, Africa, precisely Nigeria which has been plagued with incessant sectarian violence is yet to prioritise attention on this perturbing issue, especially as it regards the effect the spinning of the violent cycle stands to impact on conflict mediation and resolution. This gave rise to the conduct of this research assessing the violence cycle proposition using communal violence with clearly identified differences as exemplified through hostile groups with children samples. The paper explores deep understanding on the possibility of children exposed to violent conflict becoming actual violent conflict perpetrators sequel to varying level of exposure to the hostile animosity. It further examines the foreseeable future of such communities drawing from the views, opinions and the tendency of the child victim upon whom deduction is made on his/her tendency of exhibiting violent attributes as an actual violent conflict perpetrator. Thereafter, conclusion is made with suggestions and recommendations towards curbing the problem.

Keywords: Violence cycle, violent conflict, actual violent conflict perpetrators, Jos, Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Research suggests children exposed to differing levels of violence: domestic, child abuse; media portrayed; or peer violence stand high chances of becoming delinquent or violent at later stages of life (Widom, 1989; Margolin & Gordis, 2004). Such exposure could be in varying form either as direct victims, inescapable witnesses or through vicarious victimhood (Musa, 2014). Either case, such children are at risk of engaging same risk behavioural pattern. Eitle & Turner validated this asserting that "exposure to violence in community along with a history of receiving traumatic news, direct victimisation in the community, recent life events, and associations with criminal peers increase the risk for young adult criminal offending" (2002, p.231). Agnew (1992) had observed that the accumulation of adverse strains and the recency of such strains engenders anger, negative behaviour and thus, translates to violent tendencies. Therefore, "the malleability of children's physical and psychological growth and development makes them more apt to changes and adaptations to violent situations… *hence*, their ability to function in the society in future will be affected" (Scheper, 2002, p.8).

Jos Plateau State of Nigeria has long been plagued with perhaps avoidable but incessant and discontinuous outpour of communal violence for well over a decade now (Musa, 2014). This sectarian violence at present is however, within controllable level but for infrequent hate motivated target attacks and community raiding by alluded herders on rural communities acclaimed to have engaged in cattle rustling and those seen as easy targets or such that are easily attacked by reason of difficult accessible terrain and clear absence of security personnel. The violence though contained to a reasonable extent has however accounted for several lives, numerous negative structural, relational and existential conundrums (*ibid*). Many such negative consequence of the violence clearly visible today as research affirms includes: residential compartmentalisation; destroyed and damaged landmarks and properties; hostile interpersonal relationship especially among persons of different religious affiliation; inability to freely visit and access certain streets, markets and business premises by reason of religious belongingness; high level distrust, acrimony, rivalry and enmity among the populace (Best & Rakodi, 2011; Musa, 2014).

Research finding has reported the exposure of children to the Jos violent conflict. A relatively dated study provides account of hospitalised children who have suffered as direct victims to the violence observing how they are deliberately targeted as victims of the violence (Uba, Kidmas, Sule & Nwadiaro, 2003) Recent report from a phenomenological finding indicates acute exposure of children to the violent conflict with little or no attention prioritised to their concern (Musa, 2014). However, the place of the child amidst such violent confrontation and aggressive upheavals which has often manifested in a dehumanising manner today remains an issue of cogent concern (Salawu, 2010; Amnesty International, 2012). The Jos violent conflict presents a clear case for inquiry

with its unique attribute providing a new set of variable for investigating the violence cycle proposition. It presents distinct research problematic associating victimisation, witnessing and vicarious victimisation experiences of children to communal violence. Importantly, the manner of manifestation of the violence as an intergroup violence presents a different line of inquiry requiring investigating possible tendencies towards becoming actual hate violent perpetrators to persons of opposing religious affiliation.

2. Overview of the Violence Cycle

Reacting to issues surrounding the battered child syndrome, Curtis (1963) observed and raised concern on the likely reality of violence breeding violence. He proposed that the sequela of parental brutality leads to the "probable tendency of children so treated to become tomorrow's murderous and perpetrators of other crimes of violence, if they survive…*thereby, developing* unusual degree of hostility towards the parents and toward the world in general" (Curtis, 1963, p.386). Building on this, Widom provided support to the proposition reporting that "childhood victimization has demonstrable long-term consequences for delinquency, adult criminality, and violent criminal behaviour" (1989, p.164). Series of updates and researches to verify the claims of the violence cycle proposition have been conducted with a number showing strong support while others showing results slightly inconsistent with the proposition (Kaufman & Zigler, 1987; Widom & Maxfield, 2001; Margolin & Gordis, 2004).

The violence and injury prevention programme of The World Health Organisation in its study of child maltreatment as a case for spinning the violence cycle collated three key levels by which children risk becoming violence perpetrators to include: collective violence in group context including gang violence; violence directed at self by which the victims is the same as the perpetrator of the act; and interpersonal violence which comprises of wider range of violence at family, workplace or the level of the community (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2007). It also observed dearth of study into the violence cycle proposition in Australia, North America and Western European regions (*ibid*). Against it's large experience with series of varying violent conflicts, civil unrest and guerilla type wars, research into this is seemingly poor and lacking across the African continent, this is despite the acute exposure of children to the phenomena (Albertyn, Bickler, Van As, Millar, & Rode, 2003; Uba, *et al*, 2003; Musa, 2014).

Evidence from studies suggests that delinquent/criminal tendencies, child abuse and maltreatment, media portrayed violence and community violence places the child at high tendency of internalising and engaging violent related behaviours (Eitle & Turner, 2002; Browne & Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2005; WHO, 2007). This study sets to uncover from one infamous sectarian violent conflict in Africa, the connection of exposure to violent conflict either as vicarious victims, direct victims or witnesses and the likelihood of becoming an actual violent conflict perpetrator at community level. The research is largely guided by the antecedent of identity reconstruction in group context considering the manner of expression of the violent conflict. The Jos violent conflict understudy is largely considered as an intergroup violence considering the manner in which the violence is directed against and by members of opposing religious group. By this, the study is therefore, placed upon intergroup precepts on the argument that the Jos violent conflict understudy manifests as such, and gyrates within a social patterned relationship of existence on the auspice of distrust, enmity and rivalry (Musa, 2014).

3. Study Objectives and Research Design

This research is aimed at explicating issues involving children's exposure to violent conflict and the likely tendency for their becoming violent conflict perpetrators sequel to the exposure. It is focussed at achieving the following:
- Establishing children's violence exposure to identified violent conflict as a benchmark for further inquiry.
- Exploring the proposition of the violence cycle.
- Assessing the likelihood of children becoming actual violent conflict perpetrators sequel to exposure to identified intergroup conflict.

The research has been conducted within the precinct of qualitative research tradition, using social constructivist paradigm. The need to generalise the outcome with a good measure of external validity informed the choice of social survey design in which the data is construed. However, data was collected through one-to-one in-depth semi-structured interviews but for the vital information obtained through preliminary sampling questionnaires on the degree of exposure to the violent conflict understudy. Six secondary schools were adopted for this research in Jos North and Jos South Local Government Areas of Plateau State, Nigeria.

A total of 360 sampling questionnaires were administered to school children within age bracket 13-17 and were all duly responded to and returned on a highly confidential mechanism providing each respondent absolute annonymity. Age delimitation facilitated access to participants within this age bracket for the research and ensured the participants are persons: with reasonable exposure experience of the violence understudy; are capable of recalling and communicating the experience; and for their involvement or likelihood to be involved in perpetrating violence since study has established children within this age range as possible victims and perpetrators of violence (Uba, *et al,* 2003).

Although this research is conducted within the qualitative research tradition, elements of quantitative practice were engaged for the purpose of participant selection in the preliminary sampling phase. It was conducted by means of structured questionnaire to select exploratory samples using exposure to violence scale measures (Raviv, Erel, Fox, Leavitt, Raviv, Dar, Shahinfar & Greenbaum, 2001; Dahlberg, Toal, Swahn, & Behrens, 2005). This was for the purpose of selecting and engaging the best fit participants who have considerable level of exposure through lived experience of the violent conflict under study. The sample size was then refined using the returned questionnaires on the precept of purposive sampling with 120 respondents adopted for the study. Voluntary informed consent was sought from participants having obtained permission from their respective schools and approval from their parents/guardians for their participation in the research process.

4. Findings and Discussion
Having been construed, data from this study reveals stunning outcomes regarding the likelihood of children exposed to violent conflict becoming actual violent conflict perpetrators.

4.1 Exposure to violent conflict
Establishing the exposure of children, the sampled participants of the study to the violent conflict understudy is of great importance to this research. This is because it encompass the major bedrock upon which the research is built upon to uncover subsequent tendency for violent conflict perpetration sequel to such exposure. It is no doubt, children in Jos have long been exposed to the intermittent violent conflict which has rocked the city for well over a decade now. Findings from researchers likewise submissions by civil society organisations provides that indeed, children have long been exposed to varying heights of violence not only in Jos but at various conflict torn localities in Nigeria (Centre for Law Enforcement Education Foundation, 2005). This position was also validated by Uba *et al.* (2003) and Albertyn *et al.* (2003) indicating how children likewise adults, are carefully targeted and attacked in Jos and Africa at large. This they contend is a means of crippling the force power of the opposing group or community in conflict.

Exposure to violence as I have argued in a previous publication can be viewed as manifesting in a three-fold manner (Musa, 2014). First among is direct victimisation with series of attacks and confrontation of not only adults but children at all life stages and more deplorable, at formal institutions of learning. The recent attack and abduction of over two hundred girls this April in Chibok from their school dormitory in Borno State Nigeria further reveals the depth of direct victimisation children suffer in violence scenarios and at periods of arm struggles or confrontation in Nigeria even as they have been held hostage by the Boko Haram abductors for over a hundred days now.

Although the Chibok instance cannot be alluded to be the first of such inhumane attacks on children in their schools of learning, unlike it however, I reported the lucky ill-fate of students of a School in Jos who were swiftly rescued by security agents upon the timely distress call of their proprietor and the quick intervention of the military. One of the female student of the school who witnessed the gruesome act recalled the situation thus: "we were actually writing exams in the school then when they came to the School with sticks, machetes and all sorts of weapons demanding that all students and staff who are not their religion be handed over for them to finish us. It was the quick response of the military who were called upon by the proprietor of the school that helped rescue us from been killed that day. I cried uncontrollably beholding the sight of death, but, they did not have a single pity on us" (Musa, 2014, p.107). These instances might only be but a few of the moments children have suffered as direct victims of violence in their institutions of learning. But, by it also, one would not be wrong to allude further that such exposure stands to be even more rampant in communities and localities of their residence as the spate of violent confrontation does not occur outside of the immediate places of residence, worship and business areas such as markets.

A second mode of exposure is through witnessing of violent conflict as it is been perpetrated. As this study further validates, the occurrence of violent confrontation in streets and communities renders children helpless and thus, exposes them as inescapable witnesses to violent scenes and display of several heinous, dreadful and odious man's inhumanity to humanity as the violence pervades. The third mode of exposure depicts children

exposed to violent conflict in arguably, a proportional level with those exposed as direct victims and witnesses to the violence however, vicariously. This is because the news of destruction of family properties or residential house, or the maiming of an immediate family member poses traumatic stress, the impact which requires counselling, expertise help and assistance. Sadly, such expertise help is grossly lacking in this part of the world, hence, a debilitating impact to live with.

Importantly however, all the children involved in this study have been acutely exposed to various levels of violent conflict in one of the three mode of exposure identified. Largely, their exposure as uncovered validates previous studies showing that children's exposure to violence has been by reason of their residing and livelihood in Jos, the study area (Uba *et al.*, 2003). The exposure tends to happen at almost any area or place they find themselves; be it schools of learning, market places, worship arenas such as mosques or churches and in their streets and neighbouring streets of residence, especially those bordered by, or who live in the same street with persons of different religious affiliation. For the purpose of this research however, their exposure sets a good assessment ground for exploring the proposition of the violence cycle because the children participants have all been exposed to the identified violence, albeit in different modes as identified.

4.2 Identity reconstruction amidst life threatening violence
The exposure of children to heinous acts of violence shapes their view of society having survived the incidence. It further alters their perception of reality even as it also frustrates their desire to associate or continue sustaining interpersonal relationships and friendship with persons of different religious affiliation. Others stand the chances of suffering post traumatic stress disorders. And at heights, the three components of distrust, rivalry and enmity (Musa, 2014) gradually sets in further favouring patterned social relationship and therefore, straining individuals into associating with persons of similar religious affiliation only.

The remaining part of this article is focussed on uncovering in line with the proposition of the violence cycle, the tendency of children exposed to the violent conflict discussed herein becoming actual violent conflict perpetrators in near distant future. A closer examination of individual self concept within the social sphere and its consequent reconstruction in interpersonal relationship at societal level is first made. Thereafter, issues of cogent concern especially due to the strain they pose in influencing children into actual violence perpetration are assessed and deduction made thereupon.

4.2.1 Self-consciousness sequel to violence exposure
With any of the three mode of exposure to violence is a common question, at least to persons affected for the first time. Whether the victimisation is direct or vicarious, the common question is often, *why my victimisation?* For persons only affected at the level of witnessing the violence, the common question raised is often, *why is the spate of violence occurring in a particular manner*? Certainly, answers to the question suggest the role of identity affiliation in the manner by which the violence is manifested or directed upon the victims. Identity affiliation is therefore critical and indeed, a crucial factor for the exposure. Putting into consideration the Jos violence, many arguments have been raised regarding the centrality of religious affiliation as the basis for the manifestation of the violence, hence, further informing the need for anyone affected or not to seek alliance and also cement his/her relationship with persons of similar religious belief. It is in so doing that even children who might not have been directly exposed to the violence are indoctrinated into the new patterned social relationship ensuring every association with persons of different religious beliefs are distant while maintaining and encouraging such with persons of similar religious tie (Musa, 2014).

In a sectarian communal violence as this, the manifestation of conflict across religious inter alia, political and economic lines often raises questions regarding the view and placement of oneself within the larger society in general. The view of the conflict as an inter-group contention therefore results into consciousness of self, retracting to the group of common by individual members and the re-construction of their identity along similar line. This is usually fostered by other factors which are discussed below.

4.2.2 High level ingroup versus outgroup associations
Making the first component fostering identity formation using the Jos violence as reference, ingroup /outgroup relationships occurs even with the barest level of awareness of the existence of conflict between members of worrying groups. Selective direction of violence and directing violent acts at places of worship by members of opposing religious groups such as the razing or burning of worship arenas provokes tense, anger and suspicious of religious intolerance. This further exposes to bare, the difference of individuals' self-identity by reason of their religious affiliation as different from members of other religious group. The direct consequence of this is that, inter-personal association and relationship becomes extremely connected with self-consciousness and group

affiliations. Relationships are thus, centred, built and made to revolve upon the tie of belongingness or sharing a common trait. Musa (2014) observes reasons for such actions to include the perceived and existing danger of being confronted by persons of opposing groups, and the dogmatic interpretation and compliance to religious teachings, values and beliefs.

4.2.3 Awareness of risk in associating with members of outgroup

Affiliating oneself to his or her religious group indicates the consciousness of risk and living in fear of impending danger by members of opposing group (outgroup). Such impending dangers includes falling victim to roadblocks mounted by outgroup members, been caught in the violence at a place where one's belongingness is put to question such as streets dominated by persons of other group or even boarding a taxi or commercial bus occupied by members of outgroup. Such moments and incidences create and sustain high level of tense due to the risk exposure, hence, compelling living in fear. This has led to identity reconstruction and re-consideration of inter-relationship. Relational coexistence among members of each group is then minimised while tolerance is adverse and unhealthy. In the words of a participant, "since they (members of outgroup) were chased away, they have been consistently sending threats that they are going to attack our area, so, I feel that at any slight rumour of crisis beginning anywhere, they would take that advantage to attack our area and since I also live there, I would not be spared". With such, it is no doubt, consciousness of risk exposure among persons of all age, sex and religious groups pervades. This is often exacerbated by rigid embedded religious beliefs.

4.2.4 Increasing group cohesion

As earlier established in line with previous researches and reports, the conflict is religiously manifested. And because of this awareness, a prompt reaction to the conflict is strong association of oneself with one of the religious groups by individuals in the conflicting areas. This is because so doing would mean gaining some form of protection by such persons and also re-enforcing the force power of the group against any seeming or actual impending danger capable of emanating from members of the opposing worrying group. For this reason, "self-identity tends to become fluid and apparently, reconstructed to suit the environment and situation one finds him or herself in" (Musa, 2014, p.108). Children are often cautioned by their parents and guardians against associating with persons of different religious groups. In many case scenarios as they have explained, they have been directed to completely keep or stay off streets or roads which are perceived to be of danger by reason of the dominance of members of opposing groups.

Many schools have within this time witnessed a mass exodus of children based on the religious dominance of persons living in the immediate school community. The few other children still in schools mixed with students of different religious groups report how they barely associate with each other. Only few still maintain deep level friendship to the point of visiting each other. A participant enumerated how identity affiliation is made fluid and employed as a survival mechanism thus: "I am afraid, even after the conflict has subsided and everywhere becomes calm, we find it difficult accessing areas occupied by persons of different religious group from ours. We only go to their house in our school uniform and together with their children who are our friends. On our way, we usually change our names. I who is a Muslim would ask them not to call me by my real name, I used to ask them to call me Blessing and they always laughed. When we are going into our area too, they used to change their names to Rukaya or Fatima and we'll visit these places". Such manner of relationship symbolises one filled with fear, unpromising and fragility. If this information and similar others provided by the participants are facts to consider, then, one can easily conclude that the children are aware that danger exists in associating with persons of different religious groups. This therefore implies there close association of their self-concept to their religious group, and thus, dissociating persons of different groups from their league of friends.

4.3 Strained interrelationship: Becoming an actual violent conflict perpetrator (AVCP) - Ten stages
Strained interrelationship arises as a direct outcome of identity reconstruction. It entails clear practical manifestation of differences, acrimony and animosity between conflicting group members in daily live relationships. This transpires because they all co-exist in the same society, hence, the avenue to interact or meet at certain places inevitably. This research further supports the three component new patterned relationship identified by Musa (2014). However, to this regard, strained relationship is seen cyclically revolving beyond the three and at a seven point components capable of heightening violence tendencies sequel to the exposure of the child. Importantly, amidst identity conflict, these components shape's and redefines interpersonal relationships. They are: rivalry; distrust; enmity; hatred; anger; hostile violent confrontation and; un-forgiveness. These components continues to spin even as children get exposed and deeply involved to the scenario.
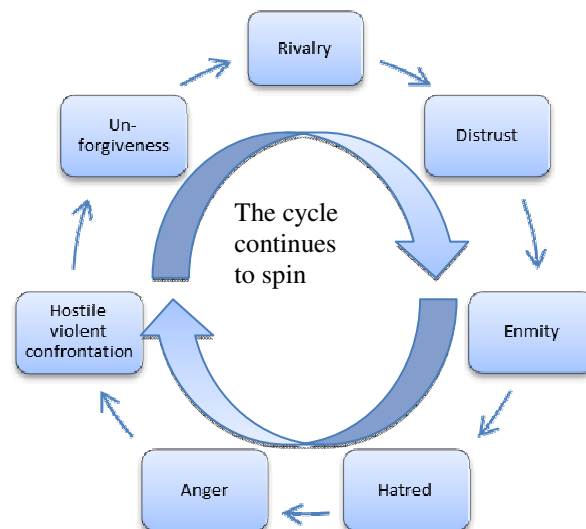
Figure 1: Components of strained Interrelationship

Data collected presents important information on the tendency that children exposed to violent conflict would become actual violent conflict perpetrators in the presence of these indicators. The specific indicators illustrated above increases the chances of internalising violence culture especially when effective social control is inadequate to stop the components from spinning. Children therefore become actual violent conflict perpetrators (AVCP) by reason of witnessing or getting victimised to such violence. Drawing from the research data, ten stages are involved in the process of a child becoming an actual violent conflict perpetrator. This does not necessarily mean every child who has turned violent or who is on the verge of becoming violent must undergo the ten stages as enumerated. However, for children who have been exposed to violent conflicts such as the Jos violence under discuss, high tendency exists for their becoming violent especially as outlined in the stages below.

4.3.1 Stage I: Exposure to violent conflict
For a child to become an AVCP, significant level of exposure to the conflict must have been established (Widom, 1998). This can be in the form of direct victimisation such as escaping threat to life, destruction/loss of property or other family possession or by witnessing and through receiving traumatic information, especially of vicarious victimisation of someone close (Eitle & Turner, 2002). This step is necessary although it does not form a basis for generalisation as study suggests that not all children exposed would necessarily become violent and not all AVCP must have suffered exposure as children (Widom, 1998). Importantly though, its significance in this process as Bandura (1973) observed is linked to social learning and internalising the effect of the trauma or harm associated with the exposure.

4.3.2 Stage II: Consciousness of risk exposure and internalising fear
Trauma created from the exposure does arouse consciousness and awareness of vulnerability to impending danger on oneself, hence, high chances of been confronted or attacked. The risk builds and leads to living in fear (Hale, 1996) and associated stress and anxiety knowing fully well the high chances of victimisation (Swatt, Varano, Uchida & Solomon, 2013).

4.3.3 Stage III: Self-helplessness and increased group consciousness
Cognizance to risk exposure, inability to effectively defend oneself alone, hence internalising fear, knowledge about the nature of the conflict helps create consciousness of belonging to a group of common (Tajfel, 1982). Such group is characterised by similar identity, same risk concerns, and shared interest which are directly or indirectly related to the conflict irrespective of any difference existing among or between individual members in the presence of external aggression or hostility (Coser, 1956).

4.3.4 Stage IV: Group cohesion
Having retracted to ingroups, cooperation and interpersonal relationship is developed and further strengthened within this group context (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood & Sherif, 1961). Group bonds emerges and solidarity over common concerns, especially as it relates with challenges and modalities towards standing up to the challenge from the outgroup is heightened to its peak (*ibid*). Sheriff & Sheriff (1965) reported further that at such

instances, unity of purpose overrides individual problems and concerns with members of ingroup while the common enemy becomes recognised as the outgroup.

4.3.5 Stage V: Development of strong entrenched group affiliation and beliefs

Close contact and group relationship strengthens co-existing bonds and unity (Tajfel, 1982). Accordingly, group members learn and internalise group values, beliefs and practices through redundant contact (Bovasso, 1996; Burt, 1987). Children for instance learn these values from home and among fellow-members of the same group. At extremes, their enrolment into schools, clubs and societies are done to deliberately ensure they are inculcated with adequate group beliefs such as religious teaching and practices in this context. These beliefs becomes entrenched that they consider any other as good as none and to a large extent, sacrilegious. This is demonstrated all through the interview with participants viewing members of opposing groups as "*arna, malos and unbelievers*".

4.3.6 Stage VI: Intergroup friction

Experiences as victims or witness to the violence, especially where such past hurts have been accumulated, and not forgone doth leads to unhealthy relationship and rivalry between ingroup and outgroup members (Tajfel, 1982; Tajefel *et al*., 1971). Such unhealthy relationships as data from this research provides includes heightened enmity, dis-association and distrust of members of outgroup. Consequently, the desire to retaliate through reprisal attack becomes increasingly high as ingroup members continue having frequent proximity. Eitle & Turner (2002) substantiated this further noting that such group retraction paves way for associating with deviant members from whom, high tendencies to learn and inculcate violent and aggressive behaviour becomes high and moral justification provided for the acts as data from this research further corroborates.

4.3.7 Stage VII: Wielding arms and light weapons amidst inadequate social control

Children understudy have been constantly exposed to arms and other weapons such as machetes, swords/daggers, clubs among many others. Most importantly, a significant number of them have borne witness to scenes of violence. Data from participants reveals that "when the conflict begins, people carry all these weapons in the open". "During the conflict, you'll be surprise the kind of gun shots you here or even see people using". Invariably, some have been victimised or seen other persons been victimised including been killed or slain in their very presence. Whereas they have seen how these arms and weapons have been put into use to perpetuate violence, some are aware of the presence of such arms and weapons even in their houses. At extreme, there is the possibility that some carry about light weapons such as jerk-knife rationalising it as a self-defence measure. "I walk with safeguards… we have machete and other weapons at home". Whatever the reason is, it is rather extreme when children advance from sights of violence perpetration to actual arm possession.

The crux of the matter here is the much that these children have been exposed to violence, they have also been exposed to numerous types of arms and light weapons especially as it is actually being put into use against fellow humans. Inadequate social control has overtime led to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (Okoro, 2011; Onuoha, 2012). A direct consequence is the existence of several arm groups and the sophistication of violent conflicts with the presence of various types of arms including military type assault weapons (Best & Kemedi, 2005). The failure of the State and the criminal justice agency to bring culprits to book and punish previous perpetrators efficiently has set precedence for rationalising their usage. Logically, where previous offences are overlooked with the perpetrators/offenders left roaming the streets; they tend to gain fame, recognition and acknowledgement for the very offences/crime they have committed. This makes it much easier for further rationalisation of the violence even by children who would have drawn lessons if legally sanctioned punishment were served on offenders. Generally considered, acts of violence receives further boost where State response is weak in containing the acts. However, the reality is appropriate sanctions, punishment, laws, efficient conflict management and resolution likewise reconciliatory measures have continued to be inefficiently employed.

4.3.8 Stage VIII: Heightened hostility

Acquisition of arms and weapons becomes apparent in the face of intergroup friction (Best & Kemedi, 2005). As this study reveals, rationalisation is often provided for arms acquisition as a means of self-defence, however, through illegal acquisition though. Weapons and arms therefore provides some means of security and group confidence to stand against outgroup members. Though children may not necessarily have direct access to dangerous weapons as uncovered in the study, light weapons such as jerk-knives, machetes among others remains easily accessible to them. This increases their tendency to pick up arms and weapons, and, no doubt, seek for reprisal upon provocation or receiving news about an upsurge of the violence, even if not in their immediate neighbourhood.

4.3.9 Stage IX: Un-forgiveness and accumulation of hurts
Agnew (1999; 1992) provided highly critical and important line of reasoning connecting clustering of strains/stressors and anger with violence, aggression and criminality. Cognisance to his assertion, data from this research suggests that accumulation of such hurts and stressors breeds room for AVCP. Remembering traumatic events such as vicarious victimisation or self victimisation and witnessing the conflict alone prone one to developing hard feelings. Where individuals accumulate such painful experiences and fail to forgive from the heart (Dadang, 2010), anger sets in increasing "the individual's level of felt injury, creates a desire for retaliation/revenge, energizes the individual for action, and lowers inhibitions, in part because individuals believe that others will feel their aggression is justified" (Agnew, 1992:60). This leads to the last stage of violent conflict development, sequel to exposure to the conflict.

4.3.10 Stage X: Actual violent conflict perpetration
This stage involves actual expression of hostile actions. These actions could be verbal through name calling of members of outgroup or physical through direct confrontation using arms and weapons, as well as the destruction of houses and properties. In effect; rationalisation heightens, anger becomes uncontrollable, reprisal becomes highly desirous and past hurts provokes deep emotional hatred, hence, at slight provocation, actual violent conflict perpetration sets in. This does not just set in isolation of notable presence of elements enumerated in other stages presented herein. However, children's AVCP need not necessarily follow these stages sequentially because the magnitude of exposure may not be the same for everyone. More also, while some are able to refrain and control their anger (Agnew, 1999; 1992), others may not and some may be forced into engaging in it. By these, exception to the model is recognised, the sample size also limits it, and hence, it's in-generalisability.

Ultimately, children's exposure to violent conflict breeds consequent AVCP and thus, this validates the violence cycle proposition. This is not just in the light of witnessing, victimisation or vicarious victimisation alone, but, also because thought, association and relationships, actions and inactions are products of social learning through association with members of society which one shares similar group identity (Burt, 1987; Wilkinson, 2003). Additionally, because reality is external to human existence, it further shapes and redefines social patterns and relationship, hence, influencing individual behaviour in a group context based on the power of the situation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Blumer, 1969). In effect therefore, children learn common group response to social strains, hostile relations, negative behaviours and confrontation amidst their experiences (which could have been accumulated over a long period of time), hence, engage violence response to provocation from outgroup members.

The proposition of the cycle of violence ideation is captured in Agnew's (1992; 1999) conceptualisation of strain and delinquency. He stressed that where care and support is lacking to help curtail such strain, grievances and hurts tend to accumulate, hence, setting in the stage for consequent criminality (*ibid*). This however, often takes place in the presence of uncontrollable anger which in turn premeditates the feeling of deep hatred with the awareness of clear differences with members of other identity. Upon studying children exposed to the armed conflict in Pakistan, Kamal (1994) observed the formation of this proposition specifically noting that the children understudy increased feeling of hatred towards opposing members any time they received information about the killing of a family member. Therefore, by virtue of their exposure to violence in the presence of anger and hatred, children learn to perceive violence and aggression as a normative social order and consequently internalise and employ violent actions to practise (Dodge, Pettit & Bates, 1997).

5. Conclusion
This research study aligns with social learning theory from which it seeks relevance. It is evident that children exposed to violent conflict stand high chances of becoming tomorrow's actual violent conflict perpetrators. The finding provides support to the violence cycle proposition. It also signals high tendencies for continuous outbreak of violent conflict in Jos. This therefore requires that concerted effort and mechanisms are put in place towards the resolution of the conflict and reconciling individuals/confronting groups in the city. Critically, accumulation of hurts, likewise the ill-effects of the exposure of children to the conflict also signals significant level of impending strained interpersonal relationship among individuals in society in the near future. This conclusion is built upon the reality that children are tomorrow's leaders, not only that, but are further socialised into taking up and occupying roles in social institutions of society as the older generation ages out. To this end, it is glaring therefore that the military and security agencies of tomorrow, healthcare practitioners, legal and political institution, as well as all other societal institutions would be administered and controlled by the young generation of today. With the level of exposure to the violent conflict, accumulation of hurts and unwillingness to forgive and let go the hurts, what becomes of the society therefore remains highly unlikely to be a good sight

of tolerance and peaceful co-existence amidst the present reality and violent attributes inculcated into them. It is only obvious therefore to note that society stands high tendency of being marred by the same evil of today, hence, perpetuating the violence conflict intermittently and with even greater sophistication and complexity.

There is need for government at State and Federal level and all parties involved in the process of mediation in the conflict to note that in as much as the elderly are engaged in dialogue, a generation is rising up with accumulated hurts, grievances and animosity against each other. Drawing insight from social learning, this study provides that children are already learning and internalising the current ingroup versus outgroup hostility, hence, the upspring of a divided generation with high level of intolerance and extremely desirous of violent and aggressive behavioural tendencies especially to persons of dissimilar religious affiliation.

The wide availability of arms and weapons must be cautiously and painstakingly addressed. Disarmament and monitoring of the influx of arms and weapons, as well as local fabrication centres must be accorded due attention and priority if the sanctity and right to life is anything to go by. There is the need to disabuse the minds of children from learning and rationalising violence as it is being perpetrated. Whatever mechanism used to address the violent conflict, failure to address the conflict towards ensuring its end would continue to jeopardise any effort towards helping or preventing children from becoming AVCP. By this therefore, concern is raised on the need for the State to adopt workable plans and mechanisms capable of ensuring return to peaceful coexistence, coherence and unity. Grievances and past hurts must also be addressed due to its role in translating to anger and promoting reprisal. Such mechanisms would be very effective when aligned with measures promoting forgiveness as data from this study reveals.

Importantly, further research particularly large scale survey is of utmost importance to verify and validate the claims made in this paper. Such large scale survey would be of great relevance where comparative analysis of children exposed to violence and those without reported exposure cases are cross analysed. Cohort study would also be of immense importance and would help in bracketing the role of other intervening variables capable of influencing and advancing violent attributes.

Reference

Agnew, R. (1992). Foundation for a General Strain Theory of Crime and Delinquency. *Criminology, 30*(1), 47-87.

    (1999). A General Strain Theory of Community Differences in Crime Rates. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency , 36*(123), 123-155.

Albertyn, R., Bickler, S. W., Van As, A. B., Millar, A. J., & Rode, H. (2003). The effects of war on children in Africa. *Pediatric Surgery International, 19*(4), 227-232.

Amnesty International. (2012). *Nigeria: Trapped in the cycle of violence.* London: Amnesty International.

Bandura, A. (1973). *Aggression: A Social Learning Analysis.* Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice Hall.

Best, S. G., & Kemedi, D. V. (2005). Armed Groups and Conflict in Rivers and Plateau States, Nigeria. In N. Florquin, & E. G. Berman (Eds.), *Armed and Aimless: Armed Groups, Guns, and Human Security in the Ecowas Region* (pp. 12-44). Geneva: Atar.

Best, S. G., & Rakodi, C. (2011). *Violent conflict and its aftermath in Jos and Kano. What is the role of religion?* Religions and development. London: Department For International Development.

Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Bovasso, G. (1996). A network analysis of social contagion processes in an organizational intervention. *Human Relations, 49*(11), 1419-1435.

Browne, K. D., & Hamilton-Giachritsis, C. E. (2005). The influence of violent media on children and adolescents: a public-health approach. *Lancet, 365*, 702–710.

Burt, R. S. (1987). Social Contagion and Innovation: Cohesion versus structural equivalence. *American Journal of Sociology, 92*(6), 1287-1335.

Centre for Law Enforcement Education Foundation. (2005). *Rights of the Child in Nigeria.* Geneva: OMCT.

Coser, L. (1956). *The Functions of Social Conflict.* New York: Free Press.

Curtis, G. C. (1963). Violence Breeds Violence - Perhaps? *American Journal of Psychiatry, 120*(4), 386-387.

Dadang, M. E. (2010). *Forgiving from the Heart.* Jos: Konsel Commercial Press.

Dahlberg, L. L., Toal, S. B., Swahn, M., & B., B. C. (2005). *Measuring violence-related attitudes, behaviours, and influences among youths: A compendium of assessment tools* (2nd ed.). (L. L. Dahlberg, Ed.) Atlanta: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention.

Dodge, K. A., Pettit, G. S., & Bates, J. E. (1997). How the experience of early physical abuse leads children to become chronically aggressive. In D. Cicchetti, & S. L. Toth (Eds.), *Rochester Symposium on Developmental Psychopathology: Developmental Perspectives on Trauma* (Vol. 8 ed., pp. 263–88). Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press.

Eitle, D., & Turner, R. J. (2002). Exposure to Community Violence and Young Adult Crime: The Effects of Witnessing Violence, Traumatic Victimization, and Other Stressful Life Events. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, 39*(2), 214-237.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks CA, London and New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Hale, C. (1996). Fear of Crime: A Review of the Literature. *International Review of Victimology, 4*(2), 79-150.

Kamal, S. (1994). *Situation Analysis of Children in Armed Conflict in Sindh.* Karachi: Raasta Development Consultants.

Kaufman, J., & Zigler, E. (1987). Do abused children become abusive parents? *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 57*, 186-192.

Margolin, G., & Gordis, E. B. (2004). Children's exposure to violence in the family and community. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 13*(4), 152-155.

Musa, S. Y. (2014). A phenomenology of children exposed to the violent conflict in Jos Nigeria. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 19*(3), 104-111.

Okoro, H. C. (2011). Proliferation of small arms and Light Weapons in Nigeria: Legal implications. In E. Azinge, & F. Bello (Eds.), *Law and Security in Nigeria* (pp. 255-317). Lagos: Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies.

Onuoha, F. C. (2012). Small arms and light weapons proliferation and human security in Nigeria. In V. Gounden (Ed.), *Conflict Trends* (pp. 50-56). Umhlanga Rocks: ACCORD.

Raviv, A., Erel, O., Fox, N. A., Leavitt, L. A., Raviv, A., Dar, I., et al. (2001, March). Individual measurement of exposure to everyday violence among elementary school children across various settings. *Journal Of Community Psychology, 29*(2), 117-140.

Salawu, B. (2010). Ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria: Causal analysis and proposals for new management strategies. *European Journal of Social Sciences, 12*(3), 345-353.

Scheper, E. E. (2002). On the brink: Prevention of violent conflict and protection of children in deeply divided societies. *Conference on Religious Women, Children and Armed Conflict, World Conference of Religions for Peace and UNICEF.* Cordoba.

Sherif, M., & Sherif, C. W. (1965). Research on intergroup relations. In O. Klineberg, & C. Richard (Eds.), *Perspectives in Social Psychology* (pp. 153-177). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Sherif, M., Harvey, O. J., White, B. J., Hood, W. R., & Sherif, C. W. (1961). *Intergroup conflict and cooperation. Robbers Cave experiment.* Norman, Oklahoma: Institute of Group Relations: University of Oklahoma.

Swatt, M. L., Varano, S. P., Uchida, C. D., & Solomon, S. E. (2013). Fear of crime, incivilities, and collective efficacy in four Miami neighborhoods. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 41*, 1-11.

Tajefel, H., Billig, M. G., Bundy, R. P., & Flament, C. (1971). Social Categorization and Intergroup Behaviour. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 1*(2), 149-178.

Tajfel, H. (1982). Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations. *Annual Review of Psychology, 33*, 1-39.

Uba, A. F., Kidmas, A. T., Sule, A. Z., & Nwadiaro, H. C. (2003). Children in Civil Crisis: The Jos Experience. *Nigerian Journal of Orthopaedics and Trauma, 2*(2), 109-111.

Widom, C. S. (1989). The Cycle of Violence. *Science, 244*, 160-166.

(1998). Child victims: Searching for opportunities to break the cycle of violence. *Applied & Preventive Psychology, 7*(4), 225–234.

Widom, C. S., & Maxfield, M. G. (2001). *An Update on the "Cycle of Violence".* National Institute of Justice. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.

Wilkinson, D. L. (2003). *Guns, violence and identity among African-American and Latino youth.* New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing.

World Health Organisation. (2007). *The cycles of violence: The relationship between childhood maltreatment and the risk of later becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence.* Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe.

The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:
http://www.iiste.org

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page: http://www.iiste.org/journals/ All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: http://www.iiste.org/book/

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digtial Library , NewJour, Google Scholar