



Domestic Violence: Nigerian Experience

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Abstract

Domestic violence is a global issue and has caused a lot of harm to many people. This paper discussed domestic violence, forms of domestic violence which include physical, emotional, economic, psychological and digital abuse. It also exposed signs of domestic violence, causes of domestic violence and harmful effect of domestic violence. Additionally, the paper discussed preventive major which include talkless, avoid provocative words and actions, nagging should reduce, be reasonable in your demand among others. Among the recommendations made are domestic violence should be made public as a crime. Victims should therefore speak out and seek help, counsellors should integrate the danger of domestic violence into marriage counselling, couples should be given proper counselling about domestic violence before dabbling into marriage and others.

Key words: Domestic, violence, Nigerian Experience

Introduction

Domestic violence in Nigeria is a problem as in many parts of Africa. There is a deep cultural belief in Nigeria that it is socially acceptable to hit a woman to discipline a spouse, intimidate a younger person, rape a woman, molest and threatens someone's life. All these actions against someone's wish is referred to domestic violence. Domestic violence or abuse is a pattern of behaviour used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship. According to University of Michigan, domestic violence occurs when a person uses physical violence, coercion, threats, intimidation, isolation, stalking, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or economic abuse to control another partner in a relationship. Domestic violence is abuse that happens in a personal relationship (WebMD, 2017). Also National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) (2017) sees domestic violence as the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault and or other abusive behaviour as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another.

Domestic violence can affect anyone of any age, gender whether it is physical or psychological. It is destructive for both the battered and the batterer. It has been from generation to generation. Domestic violence can happen between past and current partners, spouses or boyfriends and girlfriends. It affect men and women of any ethnic group, race or religion, gay or straight, rich or poor, teen, adult or elderly. Most victims are women. This is in line with the reports from Project Alert, a non-governmental women rights organization (NGO). They indicate that violence against women is alarming in Nigeria. A survey carried out by the organization in Lagos State revealed that 64.4% women interviewed in the work place had been beaten by a partner while 56% of market women had also experienced domestic violence.

In Nigeria domestic violence is one of the under estimated and under reported crimes. It has been grossly under reported and not document as a result of cultural factors (Afro News, 2017) in line with this Effah-Chukwuma (2013) stressed that the rate of domestic violence in Nigeria cannot be established as a result of lack of national survey. Although studies around the world had shown that women are significantly more abused by their partners than man (Oyadeji, 2014). According to him the number of women violently abused in United State four million every year – probably one victim in every seconds. Etter and Birzer (2007) in their research reported that approximately 80.8% of the accused abusers were man to compare with 19.2% of female offenders.

Types of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence may include physical violence, sexual abuse, economic abuse, psychological/emotional abuse and spiritual abuse.

Physical Abuse: According to Ayadeji (2014) physical abuse has to do with anything that causes physical pain such as hitting, biting, kicking, stabbing, punching, shooting or slapping one's partner, it also includes denying a partner medical care or forcing a partner to use drug or alcohol. It also involves physical force against someone in such a way to injure or endanger the person. It can also be inform of torture, acid baths among others which aim at disfiguring the person. Signs of physical abuse include pushing, slapping, biting, kicking or choking partner, damaging property when angry with partner-hurting children in the family, trapping spouse at home or keep your spouse from going out. Others include forcing spouse out to leave home, abandonment, sleep deprivation, kidnapping, suffocating victims and threatening spouse among others.

Economic Abuse: This is a inform of abuse where one intimate partner controls the partners access to economic resources. It is an attempt made to make one's partner to be financially dependent on the abuser, withholding one's access to money or forbidding one's attendance to school or employment. It also involves limiting the partner the access to money, phone or car. Making the abuser to account for every penny spent at home. It also involve denial of food, clothing, medication and shelter.

Digital Abuse – includes technologies such as texting and social networking to bully, harass, talk or intimidate a partner. It is usually perpetrated online example are sending negative, insulting and threatening emails, facebook messages, tweets or other messages online. Use of any kind of technology monitor partners.

Spiritual Abuse – involves preventing a person from engaging in his or her spiritual or religious practices or using one's religious believe to manipulate or dominate a partner (Aihie, 2009).

Causes of Domestic Violence

So many factors are responsible for domestic abuse. In Nigeria, some of these factors includes economic, social, psychological, cultural and religious factors.

Economic Factor – loss of job by partner may bring undue financial pressure on the family. This may result to lack of understanding which might lead to domestic abuse. Also poverty which hinders partners from living up to their responsibilities might trigger family violence inform of neglect, disrespect and abandonment. A lot of individuals/families fall victims due to hardship.

Cultural Factors – in Nigeria some culture, values and believe are found to support or reinforce domestic violence. In some part of Nigeria, wife battering is usually regarded as form of discipline for stubborn wives. In Igbo land precisely wives are bound to obey their husband's instruction whether the instruction is reasonable or not. Also this believe that men have born right to control women is a strong factor. The believe that women are inferior while men a superior, contributes a lot to domestic violence.

Social Factor – According to Albert Bandura the propounder of the social learning, he explained that behaviour can be learnt and also it can be unlearned. This means that one can learn to practice domestic violence from neighbours, friends and co-workers by observation. He also predicts that those raised in aggressive family should grow in aggressive way. Exposure to domestic violence reinforces it on individual. For example a child who observes his or her parents maltreating each other will grow to live like her parents if he/she eventually marries.

Power and Control – This is a situation where one partner controls the other partner. This situation usually attracts domestic violence. Other things that bring about domestic violence under social factor are social stress, anger and lack of self control, alcoholism, jealousy among others.

Biological Factors – Domestic violence could be genetically acquired from abusive parents. Brain dysfunctioning could also lead to domestic violence.

Psychological Factors – It affect the self esteem and self worth, they shrink in and withdrawn from fear of being hurt or molested again.

Harmful Effects of Domestic Violence on the Abuser

Domestic violence hurts victims as well as their families, people who suffer from abuse can be badly hurt. They are also likely to have long-lasting (chronic) health problem such as depression, headache and post-traumatic stress disorder. This is because of the repeated injuries and stress from living with abuse. There has been increase in acknowledgement that a child who is exposed to domestic abuse during his or her upbringing will suffer developmental and psychological damage. During the mid 1990s the adverse childhood experience study (ACE) found that children who were exposed to domestic violence and other forms of abuse had higher risk of developing mental and physical health problems (Innovation Exchange Team, 2013).

Abusers suffer from physical injuries such as bruises, broken bones, head injuries, internal breaking lacerations, miscarriage and sometimes death as a result of domestic violence. Other

chronic health conditions that have been linked to victims of domestic violence are arthritis, irritable bowel syndrome, chronic pain, pelvic pain, ulcers and migraines. Also pregnant victims may experience labour and injury to or death of the fetus (Jones, Richard, Horan & Deborah, 1997).

Preventive Major

1. Talkless
2. Avoid provocative words and actions
3. Nagging should reduce
4. Be reasonable in your demands
5. Be tolerance
6. Be patience
7. Avoid power tussle in your home
8. Be respectful to your partner or elder
9. Don't be lazy
10. Always try to take your responsibility and play your role well
11. Maintain a peaceful environment
12. Avoid vengeance

Coping Strategies for the Victims

1. Confide on any family members who is supportive
2. Family counselling or family therapy is necessary
3. Assertiveness training is necessary for the victim to be free in expressing themselves
4. Be occupy with productive activities
5. Be filled with positive talk
6. Practice relaxation techniques
7. Practice meditation techniques
8. Use of affirmation – exposing the information
9. Use group dynamics therapy
10. Behaviour modification (Rekha, 2013)
11. Be reasonable in your demands
12. Reading the word of God
13. Prayer therapy
14. Self control
15. Avoid the abusive environment.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made;

- i. Counsellors should integrate the dangers of domestic violence into marriage counselling. Couples should be given proper given counselling about domestic violence before dabbling into marriage.

- ii. Domestic violence should be made public as a crime. Victims should therefore speak out and seek help.
- iii. Parents and significant others in the society should be good, non violent and a good role model for the young ones to emulate. Also the young ones should be made to understand that violence life is not helpful instead they should be tolerance, considerate and cooperative.
- iv. Leader (religious, traditional, institutional and political) should publicly condemn the act. Moreover, religious leaders should show interest more in the preventive measure of domestic violence.
- v. There should be sanctions for the perpetrators of domestic violence for others to be discouraged. Also Government should enforce the existing laws against domestic violence and new legislation that would adequately address the act as a social ill should be established.
- vi. Partners should always ensure that they embrace peace by frankly discuss their differences and embrace to understand themselves.

Conclusion

Domestic violence is a social problem in Africa particularly in Nigeria. Many see it as private business since it mostly occurs between husband and wife or close relation. Due to the challenges and troubles of domestic violence, people should be made to know the bad effect of domestic violence and should be discourage from dabbling into it to maintain calm and free environment for the well being of the masses.

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