

Conceptual Analysis of Domestic Violence: Prevalence and Panacea

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Abstract

This term paper focused on the prevalence and panacea of domestic violence in Nigeria. The study assessed the rate of occurrence and causes of domestic violence. It also assessed the remedy to the domestic violence and strategies to curb the perpetrators of domestic violence. Domestic violence is an issue which must be dealt with on time before it gets out of hand. Women's lives are at risk when they reside in the same house with people who could end their lives just because of trivial issues or because they cannot control their temper. Violence does not only affect such men/women, but it also affects their children, their aged parents and the society as a whole. People who constantly suffer violence cannot render any positive help towards the society. To reduce domestic violence situation in Nigeria, all stakeholders must be involved; the communities, religious groups, institutions and government at all levels.

Keywords: Prevalence, Panacea, Domestic Violence,

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Introduction

Domestic Violence is an issue of global concerns, it occurs globally (Dahlberg and Krug, 2012). Families from all social, racial economic, educational and religious backgrounds experience domestic violence in different ways. It has begun to be viewed as a criminal problem. However, in many societies such as the Nigerian society it is still culturally acceptable. This paper discusses the prevalence of domestic violence in Nigeria, the different forms of abuse which may occur in the home and the solutions to them. According to the US department for Justice (2016), domestic Violence can be defined as a pattern of abusive behaviour in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over other intimate partner.

Domestic violence refers to any abusive treatment of one family member by another, thus violating the law of basic human rights (WHO, 2003). It includes battering of intimate partners and others, sexual abuse of children, rape and traditional practices that are harmful to women. Obi and Ozumba (2017), report that in the United States of America, each year, women experience about 4.8 million intimate partner-related physical assaults and rapes while men are victims of about 2.9 million intimate partner related physical assaults. In parts of the third world generally and in West Africa, in particular, domestic violence is prevalent and reportedly justified and condoned in some cultures. For instance, 56% of Indian women surveyed by an agency justified wife-beating on grounds like bad cook, disrespectful to in-laws, producing more girls, leaving home without informing, among others (Bakare et al, 2018).

Concept of Domestic Violence (DV)

Domestic violence against women is the most pervasive yet least recognized human rights abuse in the world. It is also a profound social problem, sapping women's energy, compromising their physical health, and eroding their self-esteem. Worldwide, one of the most common forms of violence against men and women is abuse by their intimate partners. Partner violence occurs in all countries and transcends social, economic, religious, and cultural groups. Information on the amount of violence in families shows that it is not a rare phenomenon. Violence, represents a rather extreme example of the failure of supportiveness. It is found in every kind of family, and it can reach extreme levels. For example, family fights are one of the most frequent reasons for police calls in developed countries. However, domestic violence is one of the leading causes of death among women and is the most common cause of non-fatal injury (Marcus, 2007). The common forms of abuse reported were shouting at a partner (93%), slapping or pushing (77%) and punching and kicking (40%).

Oyediran and Isugo-Abaniher (2015), in a study of women's perception of wife-beating in Nigeria, found that 64.4% and 50.4% of ever married and unmarried women, respectively, expressed concerns for wife beating. Reports in the print and electronic media reveal vicious attacks on women by intimate partners in different forms such as 'acid bath', rape, beatings, some of which sometimes result in the death of the victim. Many victims do not report for fear of reprisal from abusers or the belief that the police and the judicial system cannot help. There are different forms of abuse a person may be subjected to in the home. These include:

1. Physical abuse: This is the use of physical force in a way that injures the victim or puts him/her at risk of being injured. It includes beating, kicking, knocking, punching, choking, confinement. Female genital mutilation is physical abuse. Physical abuse is

one of the commonest forms of abuse. Obi and Ozumba (2017) found that 83% of respondents in their study reported physical abuse.

2. Sexual abuse: This includes all forms of sexual assaults, harassment or exploitation. It involves forcing a person to participate in sexual activity, using a child for sexual purposes including child prostitution and pornography. Rape also comes under this.
3. Neglect: This includes failure to provide for dependents who may be adults or children, denying family members food, clothing, shelter, medical care, protection from harm or a sense of being loved and valued.
4. Economic abuse: This includes stealing from or defrauding a loved one, withholding money for essential things like food and medical treatment, manipulating or exploiting family member for financial gain, preventing a loved one from working or controlling his/her choice of occupation.
5. Spiritual Abuse: This includes preventing a person from engaging in his/her spiritual or religious practices or using one's religious belief to manipulate, dominate or control him/her.
6. Emotional Abuse: This includes threatening a person of his or her possession or harming a person's sense of self-worth by putting him/her at risk of serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional or mental disorders. Shouting at a partner, criticism, social isolation, intimidating or exploitation to dominate, routinely making unreasonable demand, terrorizing a person verbally or physically and exposing a child to violence were found to be common form of emotional abuse.

Some causes of domestic violence according to Bakare et al (2018) are discussed below

1. Violence in Family of Origin: Most times, men unconsciously follow in the footsteps of their fathers. Men who come from abusive homes and who have watched their mothers being mercilessly beaten by their fathers have the tendency to do the same to their partners, while still in a relationship, and thereafter to their wives, after they are married. Ladies who have witnessed their domestic help being beaten by their mothers have a tendency to do the same to their domestic help later in life.
2. Lack of Education: The level of education a man has achieved affects his thinking and therefore his reaction whenever he is provoked. Some uneducated men usually have an attitude of inferiority complex and when they are wronged by their wives, their perception is that their honour has been put to the test so, inadvertently, they resort to beating their wives to prove that they are still men and the head of the home. It was discovered that the less educated men had more tendency to beat their wives. Education influences a person to respect the rights of women and to know the likely health consequences of wife battery.
3. Culture: Culture can be defined as the traditions and way of life that are encompassed by a number of people living in a particular community. The culture of a particular society affects their way of life to a large extent and also, the manner in which women are treated and accorded respect in the family and community. Many customs in Nigeria believe that women are the lesser beings probably because of their feminine nature, soft attitude and lesser physical strength and assume that men should be revered by women at all times.
4. Poverty: Poverty, according to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, poverty was defined as the state of being poor while 'poor' was defined as; having little money. Poverty however, does not only include the lack of money, but also the lack basic



amenities of life like shelter, food and clothing. Poverty causes educational disadvantage and gender discrimination and these potent factors could force people to engage in child marriage and domestic violence.

5. Religious Orientations: On the basis of the scripture, many men have abused their wives either physically or verbally. Such men assume they should be accorded with all respect that equals that of a servant to a master and anything outside of this behaviour is met with a measure of their physical strength against their wives. This practice has been evident in the earlier periods and is still prevalent in some communities.
6. Weaker Sex: Generally, human beings have the tendency to commit violence against people who are weaker than them. That accounts for the reason why some women abuse their domestic help and treat them in a manner which is detrimental to their wellbeing and health. This occurs mostly because such domestic servants are not directly under the watchful eyes of their parents and those women act as guardians for those children for a period of time depending on how long they will stay with them.
7. Behavioural Risk Factors: In trying to recognize assaultive men, numerous risk factors have been identified including use of alcohol, violence toward children, anger, stress, depression and low self-esteem. Specifically, researchers have linked men's symptoms of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), borderline personality disorder, and substance abuse to the perpetration of violence against their wives and partners. Alcohol abuse, and to a lesser extent drug use, have been associated with the perpetration of marital violence in a number of studies.

Prevalence and Reported Cases of Domestic Violence

In Nigeria, reports reveal “shockingly high” level of violence against women (Garccio, 2016). Agnihotri et al (2016) reports that a third (and in some cases two-thirds) of women are believed to have been subjected to physical, sexual and psychological violence carried out primarily by husbands, partners and fathers while girls are often forced into early marriage and are at risk of punishment if they attempt to escape from their husbands. More pathetic is the revelation of gross under reporting and non-documentation of domestic violence due to cultural factors (Oyediran & Isugo-Abaniher, 2015). The situation has soared radically in recent time; many of which are not even reported and this can be witnessed in the recent social upheaval that has shaken the sanity of right thinking people in our society. For instance, on February 13, 2020, two secondary school students of Osogbo Baptist Grammar School in Ogun State who were later found to be members of a secret cult raped a female National Youth Service Corp member who happens to be their class teacher. Also, the case of a suspect who was arrested after having molested and raped an 18-month-old baby girl in Karasuwa LGA of Yobe State is in the news. In Orji community in Owerri North Local Government Area of Imo State, we have the ugly news of a 44-year-old father and his three bosom friends who allegedly raped a fifteen years old girl for two years. Recently, a 100-level student of Microbiology at the University of Benin (UNIBEN) was allegedly raped and killed by some unknown person while reading in a Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) in Benin City. In Ekiti State, a 57- year old man allergly raped seven year old girl. This very sad incident generated widespread national and international coverage and condemnation. The aforementioned sad occurrences, among many others, are extremely shocking and such savagery should have no place in every sane society.

Globally, domestic violence occurs across the world in various cultures and affects people across society at all levels of economic status, however, indicators of low socioeconomic status such as unemployment and low income have been shown to be risk factors for high levels of Domestic violence in several studies. Reports from Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) show that 25% of women in Dakar and Kaolack in Senegal are subjected to physical violence from their partners and that very few admit that they are beaten while 60% of domestic violence victims turn to a family member, in three-quarter of the cases, they are told to keep quiet and endure the beatings. The report also reveal that a law passed in the Senegalese penal code punishing domestic violence with prison sentences and fines is poorly enforced due to religious and cultural resistance. In Ghana, spousal assaults top the list of domestic violence (Hegarty et al, 2016).

In United State, according to Bureau of justice statistics (2005), women reported a six times increase rate of domestic violence than men while some sources States that gay and lesbian couples experience domestic violence at the same frequency as heterosexual couples. According to various national surveys, the percentage of women who were physically assaulted by an intimate partner varies substantially by country, Barbados (30%), Canada (29%), Egypt (34%), New Zealand (35%), Switzerland (21%), United State (33%). South Africa is said to have the highest statistics of gender based violence in the world, including rape and domestic violence (Bakare et al, 2018).

Consequences and Panacea of Domestic Violence

Victims of domestic violence are often in a position of dependence (financial, emotional, physical and otherwise) on the person abusing them, for instance, a husband and a wife, children and parents, dependent relatives, aged parents and domestic servants. Children are often principal victims of domestic violence. Witnessing abuse and living in an environment where someone else, usually a care giver is a victim of abuse, can be psychologically devastating for a child. Agnihotri et al (2016) reports that children who are hit by parents have higher rates of depression than those whose parents disciplined in other ways and are more likely to think about suicides. Some researchers have also found that children whose mothers were abused by their partners have intelligence quotients (IQs) lower than usual (BBC New Education, 2013). Violent punishments such as corporal punishment have been found to lead to delinquency in adolescent and subsequently violent crimes. The adolescent may become socialized in violent behaviour. He or she may become confused and angry. The anger may become directed towards either parents or other children. They may become aggressive, becoming troublesome at home and at school. They may also become withdrawn, isolating themselves from others and may underachieve academically. Victims of domestic violence (whether children or adults) may suffer physical injuries such as minor cuts, scratches and bruises. Others may be more serious and cause lasting disabilities such as broken bones, internal bleeding and head trauma.

Some of the remedies for Domestic Violence in the society are; Lifesaving acquisition, educating the boy child, restraining order, advocacy and participation lots more.

1. Lifesaving acquisition: Lifesaving skills are learned skills that enable people develop behavioural and social competencies that enhance their development and personal relationship. In relation to domestic violence prevention, life skills are practical competencies that help young people adopt positive behaviour, manage emotions,

- improve their Interpersonal relationship which consequently prevent proneness to domestic violence as well as tendency to violating others (Obi & Ozumba, 2017).
2. Educating the boy- child: One cannot rule out the breakdown of moral values in schools and institutions being a major fundamental contributing factor to the prevalence of domestic violence in every society across the world. If every boy is properly taught from childhood that it is morally wrong for a boy- child to raise his hand against a girl- child. Boys should properly be taught how to respect the dignity of girls in every situation.
 3. Restraining order: This is also called protective order. It is a court order that can protect someone from being physically or sexually abused, threatened, stalked or harassed. Restraining order include other protected persons like family or household members of the protected person. Restraining order can generally be obtained from the court or some police stations.
 4. Advocacy and participation: More efforts should be geared towards supporting advocacy groups and initiatives. Despite many advocacy initiatives, various countries still encounter implementation and enforcement challenges. There is therefore, an urgent need for improvement. Issues concerning human right such as gender based violence need to be brought to the fore front.

Implications for Nursing Education and Practice

This study may be of significance to nursing practice, as nursing staff caring for women suffering from domestic violence can be facilitated in developing a positive attitude towards the use of screening questions, better communication methods and advanced training during the course of their study. Nurses often have a duty of care towards their patients/clients, yet Intimate Partner Violence /Domestic Violence is thought to be largely unreported or unasked, with many of the women going home with the perpetrator. It is important to consider that nurses are professionals who are often involved with the care of patients, which may create a safe environment for a disclosure to happen. Hence, there lies a need for mandatory collaboration between secondary and primary health care along with trainings, liaising with some local agencies, to provide support to women who experience Domestic violence. It is essential to include post- and pre-registration courses in nursing curriculum. Cooperative networking are required for establishing the multi-agency guidelines and trainings, all of which tends to influence the Domestic Violence identification. Referral channels and information sharing need to be established in secondary and primary sectors for providing assistance in this process. Training at multi-agency levels are needed to: raise awareness, identify, estimate risk levels, document as well as identify suitable intervention levels. Most of the nurses lack adequate knowledge in reacting to and identifying violence against men and women.

Conclusion

Domestic Violence is a societal menace, a human right pervasion and global problem which impacts negatively on the health of individual especially adolescence. It is caused by several factors hence addressing it also requires multi approaches and formal/informal strategies involving individual, communities and non- governmental agencies which focus on empowering the populace which enable them to develop competencies required for successful family life and interpersonal relationship which will subsequently prevent or at least reduce domestic violence in the society. This is necessary for enhancing the socio

economic development of the country as well as reduction in morbidity and mortality rates in the country.

Domestic violence is an issue which must be dealt with on time before it gets out of hand. Women's lives are at risk when they reside in the same house with people who could end their lives just because of trivial issues or because they cannot control their temper. Violence does not only affects such men/women, but it also affects their children, their aged parents and the society as a whole. People who constantly suffer violence cannot render any positive help towards the society. They cannot govern people and be at the helm of affairs of business, government and their own lives. Victims of violence and other forms of abuse might have reduced concentration and effectiveness at work or in life. Gender should not be a disadvantage, the law must reiterate this and bring erring men to book. Men with genuine psychological challenges must also seek help. Nurses tend to play a statistically significant role in recognizing individuals who are DV victims, boosting the developments of safety plan as well as expediting access to support on top of assistance.

Recommendations

- To remedy the domestic violence situation in Nigeria, all stakeholders must be involved; the communities, religious groups, institutions and government at all levels.
- In schools, during Parents' Teachers' Association meetings, the school counsellor could give enlightenment talks, encouraging parents to use disciplinary measures, which are non-violent on their children and avoid exposing children to domestic violence of any form.
- The school counsellor could organize group counselling sessions for the different age groups and classes, on the advantages of a violence free society.
- Churches and mosques should organize seminars and outreach programmes where professional counsellors are invited to enlighten the people on the need for a violence free society with the home as the cradle. Young couples planning to get married should be guided on the ways to avoid violence in the intimate relationship of marriage.
- The government should establish and fund counselling centres at the community, and Local Government levels and employ professional counsellors to help victims and perpetrators of domestic violence.
- Counselling can also be coupled with treatment procedures for men whose main reason for committing such crime is drunkenness, genetics, behavioural disorders and such other reasons that can be treated.
- Family courts which deal with sensitive issues such as rape, battery, sexual assault, among others, should be private and only parties, their lawyers and the judge should be allowed to witness the proceedings. This is because many victims of domestic violence would prefer their matters being kept out of the public glare. Family courts have been inaugurated in some states in Nigeria like Ekiti and Lagos States for the purpose of ensuring justice for women and children and promoting peace in the family.
- The health care system is well-placed to identify women who have been abused and refer them to other services, as the vast majority of women visit a health facility at some point in their lives for example, during pregnancy or to get treatment for themselves or their children. Thus, the health care system should be responsive to women suffering from domestic violence.



- Training for health care providers is necessary to guide them on the early screening and identification of women who are suffering from domestic violence.
- Shelters should be considered as a way out of the scourge of domestic abuse especially by intimate partner as continued cohabitation or visit may lead to further abuse.
- Federal and State governments should provide shelters to cater for persons who might be at greater risk when they live with abusive partners especially when such partners have made official reports.

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