

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND WAYS OF PREVENTION: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract

Domestic violence against women and children is growing at alarming rate, which calls for the intervention of leaders as well as counsellors. This paper examines the issue of domestic violence against women and children. Various concepts of domestic violence were discussed, types of domestic violence which include: physical, emotional or psychological, neglect and other forms of domestic abuse or violence such as yelling, shouting as well as financial abuse were highlighted. The paper also examined some effects of domestic violence both physical and emotional such as: swelling of the body, broken limbs, bruises, attitudinal change to others, depression and many others. Theories related to domestic violence were also discussed as well as empirical related studies. The paper provided some preventive measures to stop domestic violence and finally the writer suggested possible ways to stop domestic violence by involving the community, religious leaders, professional counsellors, school counsellors as well as policy makers. Pre-marital counselling should be given to the intending couples on how to manage their marital relationship.

Keywords: Domestic violence, Women, Children.

Introduction

Violence according to centre for disease and control for prevention for health (CDC) is the use of physical force against another person, group or community with the behaviour likely to cause physical or psychological damage (CDC, 2011). Domestic violence is a global problem where people are being victimized. According to Morgan and Chadwick in Manikam (2012) domestic violence is defined as physical violence occurring within intimate relationships and in a domestic setting.

Domestic violence against women and children in the home has been part of human history, and the society has lived with it without feeling that there is anything wrong with it. Domestic violence against women and children continues to be global epidemic that tortures, kills, maim psychologically, emotionally, and physically. It is the most pervasive of human rights violation that denies women and children of their security, dignity equality, self-worth and right to enjoy fundamental freedom. Violence against women and children is present in everywhere in most countries across the world despite their culture, class, income, education, age and ethnicity (United nations declaration on the elimination of violence against women and general assembly resolution, 1993). Furthermore, World Health Organisation WHO, (2002) defines domestic violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself and another person or against a group or community that either results in or may likely result in injury, death, psychological harm, deprivation or torture in form of kidnapping, shooting, sexual

harassment, rape, corporal punishment and so on which in the last decade have been a reported as cases of violence on Nigerian students.

United Nations Individual Children Fund (Unicef, 2007), states that domestic violence and abuse is not limited to obviously physical violence, it can mean endangerment, kidnapping, unlawful imprisonment, harassment, criminal coercion and stalking (National Network to end Domestic violence, 2011).

Mouzos and Makkai (2004) revealed that there are existing types of violence in homes, schools which include physical, psychological, sexual, gender and health based violence. The report stated that physical violence has the highest percentage of occurrence in Nigeria with 85%, followed by psychological violence with 50%, gender based violence with 5%, sexual violence with 4% and health related violence with only 1% according to their report. The convention on elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979, affirmed that the principle of fundamental rights and freedom of every human being are guided by a broad concept of human rights that stretches beyond human rights and political rights to the core issues of economic survival, health and education that affects the quality of daily life for most women and children. United Nation General Assembly (1993), postulated that violence and abusive behaviour are responsible for poor family relationship, although personal conflicts and troubles within marriage affects intimate relationship, (Olson and Defrain, 2006).

There are different levels of domestic violence, namely: the home or family, the school, community or society and the state level. This paper will only focus on domestic violence on women and children in homes and with-in their society and how it affects victims and the society at large and suggest ways of stopping domestic violence in the society.

Conceptual Clarification on Domestic Violence

Akpan and Usoroh (2005), Genyi in Zadding (2012) defined domestic violence in intimacy which can be physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or threats of physical or sexual violence that are inflicted on women and children with intentional use of force. Example slapping, pushing, biting, choking, using knife, gun, and other weapons with the potential for causing injury, controlling or domineering, intimidation, neglect and other economic deprivation harm or death. Women Aid Collective (WACOL, 2004) stated that domestic violence could be anything that constitute an action meted out to someone which is capable of depriving the individual from his or her basic human rights. Act of violence and abuse may take in different forms, and in any form that it takes, it affects individual's health and wellbeing. The roots of all forms of violence are found in many types of inequalities which continue to exist and grow in the society. Violence and abuse are used to dominate or to maintain control and power over another person and reflect the imbalance of power between the victim and the abuser, Access Economics in (Manikam, 2012).

Types of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence takes in different form which includes: physical violence, sexual violence, emotional violence, psychological violence, spiritual violence, cultural violence, verbal abuse, financial abuse and Neglect.

Physical violence: Physical violence occurs when someone uses a part of their body or an object to control a person's action. Physical violence includes, but is not limited to; Hitting, Pinching, hair-pulling, arm-twisting, strangling, burning, stabbing, punching, pushing, slapping, beating, shoving, kicking, biting, force-feeding, or any other rough treatment. Using physical force which results in pain, discomfort or injury, assaults with a weapon or other object, deliberate exposure to severe weather or inappropriate room temperature, Threats with weapon or object and Murder.

Sexual violence: Sexual violence occurs when a person is forced to unwillingly take part in sexual activity. Sexual violence includes but not limited to: Touching in a sexual manner without consent (ie kissing), forced sexual intercourse, forcing a person to perform sexual act that may be degrading or painful, beating sexual parts of the body, forcing a person to watch a pornographic film, forced prostitution, purposefully exposing the person to HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted infections.

Emotional violence: Emotional violence occurs when someone says or does something to make a person feel stupid or worthless. Emotional violence includes but not limited to: Name calling, threatening to hurt one if the person does not cooperate, Intimidating the person causing fear to gain control, Humiliating or making fun of the person, not allowing person to have contact with family and friends, threatening to abandon the person.

Psychological violence: Psychological violence occurs when someone uses threats and causes fear in a person to gain control, threatening to harm the person or his family when he leaves, Threats of violence, Destruction of personal property, Verbal aggression, Stalking/ criminal harassment, Treating a person like a child or a servant.

Spiritual violence: Spiritual or religious violence occurs when someone uses a person's spiritual belief to manipulate, dominate or control the person. This includes but not limited to not allowing a person to follow his/her preferred religion, Belittling or making fun of a person's religion, tradition and beliefs, forcing a religious path on another person, using ones spiritual or religious position, rituals, or practices to manipulate dominates or controls a person.

Cultural violence: Cultural violence occurs when a person is harmed as a result of practices that are part of his/her culture, religion or tradition, seeking divorce, Infidelity, committing adultery, sexual slavery, Murder, Banishment, Female circumcision, being raped, abandonment of older person by the family.

Verbal abuse: Verbal abuse occurs when someone uses language whether spoken or written, to cause harm to a person. Verbal abuse may include but not limited to: Yelling. Lying, Insulting, swearing, Name calling, Shouting etc.

Financial abuse: Financial abuse occurs when someone controls a person's financial resources without the persons consent or misuses those resources, destroying personal property, controlling person's choice of occupation, not allowing a person to participate in educational programs etc.

Neglect: Neglect occurs when someone has the responsibility to provide care or assistance for you but does not, abandonment in a public setting, failing to meets the needs of a person who is unable to meet those needs alone, not remaining with a person who needs help etc.

Causes of Domestic Violence Against Women

Agu (2018: 2) stated some of the causes of domestic violence as: Traditional Beliefs, psychological disorder, family traits, alcohol or narcotic abuse, unemployment and economic hardship, jealousy, and anger among some.

Traditional beliefs: Unfortunately, according to some of traditional beliefs women have fewer rights than men. That is why in some families with traditional beliefs we can often see cases of domestic violence. This cause of domestic violence is still widespread even in our time.

Psychological disorder or personality disorder cases: There are many cases when people in the family even don't know that one of their relatives has a psychological disorder, and this disorder can be the cause of violence. Because of the poverty, many people cannot consult with a psychiatrist and many disorders remain undiagnosed. Due to such disorders, people can be very aggressive and dangerous not only to their family but to the society as a whole.

Family traits: Domestic violence effects are very deplorable. The person could be aggressive if he/she was a victim or witness of violence in childhood. The child just can learn such model of behaviour while growing up in a family with violent parents or other relatives. This is a way of transferring violent behaviour through the generation.

Alcohol or narcotic abuse: People who take alcohol or narcotic don not control their violent impulses. Unfortunately, the alcohol or narcotic abuse is very widespread in Nigeria, so this reason of domestic violence is quite common.

Unemployment and economic hardship: Economic problems increase the level of stress and aggression, often leading to domestic violence. A high level of unemployment contributes to the facts that people quarrel in families in the conditions of accumulated stress due to lack of money, such quarrels often end in cases of violence.

Jealousy: Excessive suspicion, distrust, and jealousy often lead to cases of violence. This reason often refers to young families, such a feeling consequence to aggression.

Anger: Anger between people in family or couple often appears for many reasons, and unfortunately, it can lead to violence. The misunderstandings, lack of mutual respect all are factors that contribute to an increase in the level of anger in the family.

In a related study, Abubakar, Bagudo and Musa (2015: 321) stated that causes of domestic violence against women results from: Inadequate love between couples, forced marriage, mental illness, no respect for the husband, husband financial incapacity, wife cannot cook well, wife's clumsiness and untidiness, low level of education, disagreement on children discipline, drunkenness or husbands drug addiction and so on. According to Akinleke (2018) also identified some factors as contributing to the incidence of domestic abuse which include: drunkenness, financial demand, snubbed sexual advances, annoyance of some husbands, cultural and stereotypical belief and also combination of these factors.

Theories on Domestic Violence

Resource theory

This theory of intra-family violence developed by Goode (1971) was in fact the first theoretical approach applied exactly to family violence. Resource theory is based on the assumption that force or the threat of force is inherent in all social system. This theory asserted that the more resources including social, personal and economic a person can command within a social system, the more force he or she can muster. However, the more resources a person can command, the less the chances are that a person will actually deploy violence.

Thus, violence is one of the resources that individuals used as a last resort when all other resources are exhausted. This theory explains that traditionally the male, command higher power in the marital and family relationship, than other members namely women and children, who are in subordinate and vulnerable position. But when men lack resources like; education, marketable vocational skills, income sufficient to maintain a family and social status may likely resort to violence as a way to establish their dominance on women. In addition, family members including children may use violence to redress a grievance when they have few alternative resources available.

This theory is chosen because it explains how men exploit power and other resources they acquired to dominate their women and children when they have no alternative resource available. The cycle theory of violence and psycho-social theory of learned helplessness

Two of the most often discussed theories on battered women are Lenore Walker's 'the circle theory of violence and psycho-social theory of learned helplessness.

Lenore Walker was one of the first researchers to describe a dynamic process in abusive relationship that she called the "cycle theory of violence". Walker described three phases in the cycle of violence (walker 1979, 1984). These three phases associated with recurring battering cycle (1) the tension building stage accompanied with rising sense of danger. (2) The acute battering incident and (3) loving contrition.

In the first phase, there is a gradual escalation displayed by discrete act causing increased friction such as name calling, other mean intentional behaviours, verbal abuse and physical abuse. The batter expresses dissatisfaction and hostility but not in an extreme or maximally form. The woman may attempt to placate the barterer, doing what she thinks might pleases him, calm him down at least, what will not aggravate him. She tries not to respond to his hostile actions and uses general anger reduction techniques. This tension building phase may last for weeks or years until the tension has mounted to the breaking point (Walker, 1984).

In the second phase, the acute battering incident becomes inevitable without intervention. The phase is characterized by the uncontrollable discharge of the tension that have built up during phase one. The barterer typically unleashes barrage of verbal and physical aggression that leaves the woman severely shaken and injured. In fact, when injuries occur they usually happen during the second phase of the cycle of violence. In the third phase the barterer may apologise profusely, try to assist victim, show kindness and remorse and shower her with gift and promises. The barterer himself believes at this point that he will never allow himself to be violent again. This third phase provide the positive reinforcement for remaining in the relationship for the woman. Phase three is welcomed by both the partners who are marked by contrite loving behaviour, affection and promises by the barterer never to repeat the incident again. This cycle of violence keeps repeating itself in the lives of almost all battered women.

The theory of learned helplessness suggests that victims give up the belief that they can escape from the barterer in order to develop sophisticated coping strategies. Learned helplessness theory explains how they stop believing that their actions will have a predictable outcome. It is not that they cannot still use their skills to get away from the barterer, stop the abuse at times, or even to defend themselves, but rather they cannot predict that what they do will have the desired outcomes, sometimes they use force that

might seem excessive to a non-battered woman in order to protect themselves. This psychosocial theory or learned helplessness focus on the factors which reinforce battered women's victimization. According to this theory, battered women operates from a premise of helplessness which further serves to only aid passivity and a fatal acceptance of exploitative situation. Walker's cycle theory of violence was criticized on the ground that all violent relationships do not confirmed to the circle of violence. Particularly, the cycle theory discounts the damage done by emotional, psychological, economic and other non- physical form of abuse by focusing disproportionately on physical violence ie the acute battering phase. Another criticism of the cycle of violence theory is that it describes a static interaction between the abuser and the victim. Walker's theory describes a predestined pattern of behaviour with little freedom of choice but at the same time it may give abusers an excuse for their behaviour as part of an inevitable circle of actions (Walker, 1984).

Different researches were carried out on domestic violence against women and children. Yogo (2008) conducted a research on the impact of domestic violence against women. The research design used was survey with the use of questionnaire and interview. The population of the study was 10675 people in Baba 1 community. The sample of the study composed of 100 women chosen randomly from different women group. The researcher used qualitative and quantitative analysis. Frequencies and percentages were used in analysing the data. The results revealed that ignorance made people to behave the way they did. It was recommended that people who had no access to education should be enlightened through seminars, workshops, conference and religious gathering about the education of a girl child. Through education, parents will know their roles as parents and give women and children their right as human beings.

Ellsberg (2002) conducted a research on domestic violence against women: Methodological and ethical considerations. The study was carried out on family planning in Nicarraguan Leon (UNAN) and limited University, Sweden. A random sample of 488 women aged 15-49 were interviewed, a structured questionnaire on women's reproductive health including use of contraceptives and detailed birth histories, child health and nutrition was administered. Survey design was used, data was collected through the use of questionnaire which were filled and collected while some subjects responded orally through oral interview and the responses were filled as in the questionnaire. Data was analysed using SPSS 9.0 for logistic regression and chi square test. Significance were tested by means of 95percent confidence interval and P-value of <0.05. The study found a prevalence of physical violence from a partner of 28percent with 12percent of women reporting violence.

Similarly, Zidding (2012) conducted a research on Assessment of domestic violence and abuse against women and its effects on family relationship in four selected local governments in Taraba state. Four research questions and four null hypotheses were formulated. Descriptive survey design was used in carrying out the study with a population of 266,474 and a sample size of 500 married men and women was randomly selected using stratified random sampling. The data was analysed using mean and standard deviation to respondent's demographic variables, while Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to analyse the 4 null hypotheses which were all rejected. The finding of the study reveals that there is a significant relationship between domestic violence against women and family relationship.

Effects of Domestic Violence on Women and Children

Violence has a serious impact on the way women think and interacts with the world around them. Domestic violence affects one's thoughts, feelings and behaviours and can impact on victim's mental stability, increase anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression (feeling of sadness), feeling of hopelessness, unexplained crying and dissociation are commonly observed among the survivors of domestic violence. According to Bitangro (1999) children that are exposed to domestic violence become fearful and may face difficulties in schools including problems with concentration and poor academic performance. Spaccarell (1994) states that many children who are raised in abusive homes suffer severe emotional trauma as a result of seeing their mothers hurt, boys usually carry aggressive form of behaviour and as adults may beat their spouses.

According to Musawa (2016), the news making rounds in the print and social media is the sad story of Ronke, a banker who was allegedly beaten to death by her husband. Ronke who is a mother of two was found dead in her Lagos home on Friday 02/12/2016, while her husband was said to have fled the scene of the crime. The Lagos state command has since launched a man hunt for her husband (Mr Liken Shonde) and hopefully he will be caught soon and made to answer for his crime. Residents in the area where she lived confirmed that, she has been enduring an abusive marriage. Reports have it that she was serially abused and assaulted by her husband until the last attack that led to her death, he would tie her, beat her and take her mobile phones away.

Okoh (2016) reports that Lagos State Government has revealed that no fewer than 4,035 domestic violence cases have been recorded in the state in the year 2015. The violence has range from rape, child abuse, and sexual assault/ sexual abuse to defilement, divorce and other matrimonial issues. The government who have vowed not to shy away from prosecuting perpetrators of the crime added that the Lagos state domestic and sexual violence response team (DSVRT) had been at the fore front of the war against domestic violence in the state. The Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice Mr Adeniji Kazeem who disclose this at a news conference in Ikeje on Tuesday 6/12/2016 commended the activities of DSVRT which he said has handled 192 domestic abuse cases in 2015, explaining further, Mr kazeem noted that out of 192 cases, 89 were domestic assaults cases, 62 were defilement cases, 18 were rape cases, 6 attempted rape cases, 10 were child neglect and 7 were child abuse cases.

Samiah (2022) from the Premium Times Newspaper reports that the executive secretary of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Tony Ojukwu, said; the commission received 158,517 complaints of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) against women and children in 2021. Mr Ojukwu represented by Harry Obe, the Commission's Director women, children and vulnerable groups, said this at an event organised on Monday by ROOST foundation in collaboration with the NHRC. The event was tagged, "Roundtable on rising and pending cases of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and possible solutions in Nigeria. 'Out of 913,197 cases received by human rights commission in 2021 on women and children, 158517 cases were on SGBV (Samiah, 2022).

Preventive Measures

According to WHO (2017) there are number of well-designed studies looking at the effectiveness of prevention and response programmes. More resource is needed to straighten the prevention of and response to intimate partner and sexual violence including primary prevention and stopping it from happening in the first place. There is some evidence from high income countries that advocacy and counselling intervention to improve access to services the survivors of intimate partner violence are effective in reducing such violence. Home visitation programmes involving health worker outreach by trained nurses also helps in reducing domestic violence. However, these have yet to be assessed for use in resource poor setting (WHO, 2017).

Prevention strategies that have been shown to be promising includes those that empower women economically and socially through a combination of micro finance and skills training related to gender equality that promote communication and relationship skills within couple and communities; that reduce access to and harmful use of alcohol ; transform harmful gender and social norms through community mobilization and group based participatory education with women and men to generate critical reflection about unequal gender and power relationships. To achieve lasting change, it is important to enact and enforce legislation and develop and implement policies that promote gender equality by: Ending discrimination against women in marriage, divorce and custody laws, improving women's access to paid employment and developing and resourcing national plan and policies to address violence against women and children.

Counselling Implications

Counselling is an option available to women to acquire assistance to free themselves from violence and its effects. Sigmund freud suggested the use of psycho-dynamic therapy in behaviour modification. Therefore, to reduce domestic violence situation in the society, all stake holders must be involved, the community, religious groups, institutions, and government at all levels.

People should be made to understand that adults can change the social norms by being role models and working together to end violence in the homes.

Seminars and workshops should be organised by trained counsellors to help and assist in propagating the anti-domestic violence campaign.

The school counsellors could organise counselling session for the students. And also students should be taught on how to express anger without violence.

Schools during parent and teachers' association meeting (PTA) should also give an enlightenment talk encouraging parents to use disciplinary measures that are non-violent on their children.

Conclusion

Domestic violence against women and children is becoming rampant and increasing day by day. Looking at the cases of domestic violence and their causes, this paper will serve as an eye opener to women on finding possible ways to avoid falling victims of domestic violence as well as their children knowing that most of these type of violence are attached to homes and their immediate environment.

Suggestions

1. Religious leaders should give sermons against marital violence in their places of worship.
2. There should be public enlightenment through the mass media on the negative effects of domestic violence.
3. Pre-marital counselling should be given to intending couples on how to manage their marital relationship.
4. Punishment should be given to the offending husbands and the punishment should be publicised so that it can serve as deterrence to others.
5. Medical professionals should give immediate treatment to the victims of domestic violence when physically abused and then refer them to counsellors and psychotherapists where necessary.

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