

**AN OVERVIEW OF INTIMATE PARTNERS' VIOLENCE: AN ENCUMBRANCE TO
WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN PRODUCTIVE ENGAGEMENTS.**

By

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Abstract

The role and importance of women within any society cannot be overemphasized. Women and girls continue to suffer unequal treatments and they account for 6 out of 10 of the world's poorest, with up to two thirds of the world's illiterate population being women. Women perform 66 percent of the world's work, produce 50 percent of the world's food but earn only 10 percent of the income and own only 1 percent of the property. (UN fast facts, 2014). It is sad that some of the most inhumane treatments experienced by women are at the hands of loved ones, these violent treatments especially by a lover or partner is referred to as intimate partner violence (IPV). The consequences of IPV goes beyond physical injury, it affects the productivity of victims (women) who miss work whilst nursing injuries from IPV episodes, also most victims of IPV fall within the labour force age group and thus are not able to contribute to the economy. The paper ended by concluding that emotional, psychological, physical and mental disruptions experienced as a result of IPV hinders the overall productivity and performance of women in economic activities. The study recommended the need to abolish certain cultural and religious practices that enables IPV and also that cases of IPV should be treated as criminal offences and not mere private matters.

Key Words: intimate partners, economic dependence, women development, violence, patriarchy

Introduction

The role of women in developing countries has become recognized as the single most important factor when it pertains to bringing about and sustaining long term development. Women are farmers and food providers, business owners and traders, sometimes heads of households, mothers, support workers, community leaders, activists and role models. Although development affects men and women differently, women experience more negative consequences and this sometimes undermines women's role, status and position within the society.

Gender inequality, social norms that favour traditional gender roles, poverty, economic stress, unemployment, lack of institutional support from the police and judicial agencies, weak community response and sanctions, dysfunctional and unhealthy relationships characterized by inequality, power imbalance and conflict, drug and alcohol abuse; and being a victim of

violence as a child or witnessing violence as a child, all these factors are unique to perpetrating and experiencing IPV.

Intimate Partner Violence was introduced and adopted to encompass a broader understanding of violence within intimate relationships. The National Domestic Violence Hotline (NDVH, 2012) in Texas, defines Intimate Partner Violence as “a pattern of behaviour in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner”. It is important to clarify that although persons use the terms domestic violence, domestic abuse and intimate partner violence interchangeably, they do not mean the same thing. Intimate partner violence refers to harmful behaviours exhibited within a relationship by a partner over another, this relationship may be a marriage relationship, co-habiting, boyfriend, or girlfriend. Majority of IPV victims are women. Evidence from research studies shows that one out of three (35 percent) of women worldwide have experienced violence either physically or sexually by their partners in their lifetime (WHO, 2017).

Literature review

This section reviews literature on the causes and prevalence of intimate partner violence and the economic productivity and engagement of women, it also provides the theoretical framework that guided the study.

Overview of the causes of intimate partner violence

Culture

In African societies fathers and male family members are culturally seen as semi gods whose words must be obeyed and whose authority should not be questioned. Sons are given preference over daughters (Onigbogi, Odeyemi and Onigbogi, 2015). For instance, in many communities in Nigeria, the male child is seen as central to continuing the family name. He is also more favoured to inherit the family's lands and property as well as being more involved in the decision-making process of the society than his female counterpart.

As with most African societies, Nigeria has a strong patriarchal societal structure. All the major ethnic groups in Nigeria- Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa- have strong patriarchal societal structures that encourage men to believe they are entitled to power and control over their partners (Ishola, 2016). Patriarchy is a form of social organization in which men dominate or rule over women. It is the belief that one sex (female) is inferior to men and thus deserves inferior treatment. This patriarchal societal structure encourages men to believe they are entitled to power and control over their partners. Ahmad, Riaz, Barata and Stewart (2004) affirms that the ideology of patriarchy encourages and justifies male domination of women. They also noted that women in patriarchal settings have come to condone and stick to patriarchal norms and values, some have come to accept spousal abuse and do not necessarily label such acts as Intimate Partner Violence.

As Ahmad et al (2004) noted, women from patriarchal societies may themselves accept and adhere to patriarchal norms and values which makes it difficult for them to seek and receive help. It is the men in most families that are entitled to inheritances, education, landed properties such as farm lands, etc men also pay dowry and bride price further reaffirming their “ownership” of their wives. The practice of bride price led to the idea of ownership of the woman, the exchange of bride price being evidence of a commercial transaction. The bride price is understood by many to symbolize the sale of the female and ownership by her husband and family (Adebayo & Kolawole, 2013)

Religion

Closely related to culture is religion. Some people often hide under the guise of culture and religion to justify acts of domestic or intimate partner violence. One can hear people making statements like “it is our culture”, “the African culture allows it”, “the Bible says a woman should be submissive, and if she is not, she should be beaten”, “a foolish woman breaks her home” etc (Ishola, 2016). Also as argued by Adebayo and Kolawole (2013) religious practices

in Nigeria usually subscribe to the ideology of the man being the head of the home, with the highest level of control and decision making power resting solely on him.

Religion is a non-material aspect of culture, because it is intangible but exists to shape human behaviour and social relationships among members of the society. The bible in Ephesians 5:22-24(NKJV), *“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything”*.

Wives are admonished to be submissive to their husbands. Some women in their interpretation of the above bible verse continue to endure harsh and violent treatments from their husbands as a form of submission. According to Fortune and Enger, (2005) due to either the silence expected of women or instructions given to women, the church often communicate to battered women that they should continue to stay in abusive relationships, try to be better wives, learn to forgive and forget, this kind of statements send a subtle message to perpetrators of intimate partner violence that their efforts to control their wives or girlfriends are justified because they experience first-hand the admonition for women to be submissive.

Likewise the Quran, in quran 2:223 *“Your wives are as a tilth unto you; so approach your tilth when or how ye will*. Wives are to be sexually available to their husbands in all ways at all times”. Revolting or resisting such harsh treatments is seen as disrespectful or even ungodly. Religion also teaches and infers that women are weaker vessels and play second fiddle in the marriage partnership, since the woman is taught to be submissive to the man; she accepts violence as part of her obedient obligation to her husband. Christian women in abusive relationships for instance find it harder to divorce their abusive partners as compared to non-Christian women because the Christian woman see marriage as “made sacred by God”. Leaving such a relationship causes guilty feeling within the woman. Also Christians tend to encourage their brethren who suffer violence to wait, pray, endure and continue to be a

helpmate to the abusive partner, (Webb 2008; Foss & Warnke, 2003) in Simister & Kowalewska 2016.

Economic dependence of women on men

Traditionally the man is considered the head of the home and bread winner; providing for every aspect of the family upkeep, many women in Nigeria depend on their husbands for their economic sustenance. In recent times, however, it has become necessary for women to take up paid employment outside the home in order to complement the family upkeep and to fulfil her professional goals. This gesture or move can help make the home as comfortable as possible. However, this independence may start to make the husband feel threatened as he is no longer fully in charge of the home finances.

Money as power notion is behind the economic abuse tactic. The man is popularly referred to as the head of the house and even in cases where the man might be unemployed, he still gets to be in charge of the money earned by his working partner through the means of other forms of dominance or through the use of force or threat. Women may also use their economic advantage to control and abuse their out of job partners or partners with a lower income. Whichever way the aim is to use one's economic advantage over the less privileged partner.

Little or No Education

Little and no access to Education and low social status in communities has been linked to violence against women in some studies. According to Suleiman (2009), he describes education as the bedrock for empowerment and the only panacea to women empowerment and gender equality considering the fact that without education, it will be difficult to become genuinely economically empowered and relevant in the society.

Out of the 72 million children worldwide who are not in school, 57 percent are girls – despite the fact that if a country educates its girls, its mortality rates usually fall, fertility rates decline and health and education prospects improve overall (World Bank). Education helps in the ability to maximize any opportunity that may arise from development, whether formal or informal, education is a vital instrument for socio-economic development of any country or individuals concerned (Ainabor and Ovbiagele, 2007).

It was reported that women with little education are more likely to experience battering than those of higher level of education and that rural residents tend to agree that a husband is justified for beating his wife more than in urban areas, (Adebayo & Kolawole, 2013). According to Oyediran and Isiugo-Abanihe (2005) educated women are likely to be respected by their husbands and also female education exposes women to the mentality of equality and equity in power relation.

Recently, however the media has reported cases of many highly educated women who have been killed or suffered injuries as a result of violence by their partners. The initial reason for a higher rate of IPV among women with low or no education and rural women was reported as stemming from the perception of male-partners towards their not so educated spouses or partner and also because women in the rural areas do not have easy access to help (the criminal justice institutions); and are at a disadvantage due to the patriarchal setting of almost all rural dwellings.

Connection of Intimate Partner Violence and Low Economic Contribution of Women

It is important to state that in spite of the advantages the family and the nation stands to gain by the education and formal employment of women, unfavourable treatment by their partners or society limits the contribution they are able to make within the economy. Those who are

able to get good jobs are sometimes subjected to unfair and unequal treatments when compared to their male counterparts. According to the UN (2014), on the average, women earn 20 percent less than men worldwide – although, this figure varies from country to country.

Almost 50 percent of women have been battered by their husbands and shockingly, more educated women (65 percent) are in this terrible situation as compared with their low income counterparts (55 percent). Most endure, believing they have nowhere to go and in any case, believing, for good reason, that the law will not protect them. A staggering 97.2 percent of them are not prepared to report to the Nigeria Police (This Day, 2011; Alokun 2013).

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), World Bank (Nov, 2017) and National Bureau of Statistics, (2015) the age range of the working class is between 15-64 years. Results from an American National survey reveals that as much as 7.9 million work days are annually lost due to intimate partner violence, victims are not able to go to their places of employment due to physical injuries that may require hospital stay, abusers hiding car keys, abusers backing out of child care when they are to baby sit or pay for child care services (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2017). Victims of IPV are not able to contribute significantly to the economy as majority fall within the age bracket of the Labour force 19-49 for females and 16-59 for men and cannot participate productively at work due to absenteeism.

Reduced work hours and educational attainment lead to significant income loss for those experiencing IPV particularly women. For instance, more than 20 percent of employed Nigerian women take time off work because of violence suffered at the hands of an intimate partner and 2 percent of these women lose their jobs as a result of absenteeism, Eze-Anaba (2010). Similarly in 2014, Gbirevbie, Osibanjo, Adeniji and Oludayo asserted that the expected productivity or performance of Females at work is affected by variables like emotional, physical and mental stability and their psychological status. Once there is any form of

disruption such as intimate partner violence, such stability and status is affected, which in turn reduces the productivity and overall performance of women (Oni-ojo, Adeniji, Osibanjo and Heirsmac, 2014).

Adegoroye and Adegoroye (2008) in a study revealed that lack of finance and access to loans militate against women economic development and empowerment, women are not able to access loan due to certain practices that discourages female inheritance or the ownership of properties that can serve as collateral when the need to seek for loan arises. Similarly, Egharevba, Eguavoen, Azuh, Iruonagbe and Chiazor (2016) argued that to achieve financial freedom for women through provisions of soft loans or Agricultural aids, barriers to owning properties that may serve as collateral will have be to removed. In few societies were women have access to land ownership, research shows that they are able to access grants and financial aids which further improves their earning and productive capacities (George, Olokoyo, Osabuohien, Efobi and Beecroft, 2015).

Theoretical framework

Marxist Feminism

This branch of feminism adopts the work of Marx and Engels (1848) who described the inferior position of women as linked to class based on capitalism and it's alignment with the patriarchal family in a capitalist society. It focuses on dismantling capitalism as a way to liberate women, this is because the private property which gives rise to economic inequality, dependence, political confusion and unhealthy social relationships between men and women is cause of oppression suffered by women. Engel opined that women's subordination is not as a result of their biological make up but of social relations and that the family exists in such a complex form such that men demand women's services. Additionally the unpaid labour of women in the home and their paid labour in the labour force simultaneously serve patriarchy and

capitalism. Sexism and economic oppression are mutually reinforcing, and requires a revolutionary agenda to change both. Unpaid domestic labour for instance is viewed by the Marxist feminists as a form of enslavement of women.

Each individual in the society is influenced by the structure in place within such society, this in modern societies translates into class structure. The individual's needs, wants, interests and opportunities are shaped by the means of production available in his society. In the view of Marxist feminism, modern-day gender inequality is as a result of the capitalist mode of production, and gender oppression can be likened to class oppression, thus the relationship between men and women can be likened to that of the haves and the have-nots or the ruling class and the ruled. The subordination of women is seen as a form of class oppression since it serves the interest of the men (ruling class).

Conclusion and Recommendations

As rightly noted by Danjuma, Muhammad and Alkali (2013), the existence of certain barriers (IPV) continue to work against the enjoyment of rights and full participation of women in economic activities. Due to the patriarchal nature of most African societies, women are not able to devote the needed time or attention to their personal development due to engaging in unpaid household chores, preferential treatment of male children within the family, low and sometimes no education for female children, the glass ceiling experienced in the workplace and so on. All these coupled with violence experienced by most female victims of intimate partner violence and their dependence on their husbands or male-partners further hinders their ability to fully participate in economic activities. This study concludes by providing the following recommendations:

There is the need to promote the equal participation of women in economic activities within the society by putting certain factors in place such as equal access to education and recognition deserves as major contributors to the Agricultural sector. The Law Enforcement agencies

should also treat cases of violence against women by their intimate partners as a criminal offence and not as private matters. It is high time certain cultural and religious practices become abolished such as unequal rights to education, over-dependence of women on men for livelihood and so on that further encourages the prevalence of intimate partner violence.

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