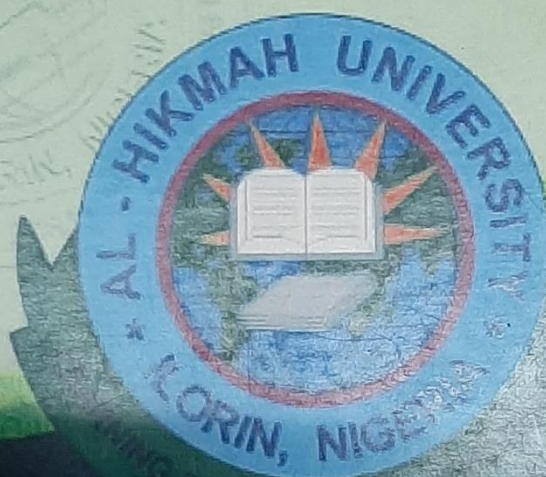


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Al-Hikmah Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences is a bi-annual publication of the Faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences, Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin-Nigeria. As a theoretical and empirical journal, the aim is to challenge, provoke and excite positive thinking in the areas of Arts and Social Sciences Humanities.

We welcome original contributors in the form of articles, reviews, notes, etc., from scholars both within and outside Nigeria that will promote and foster our aims and objectives. Articles can be English, Arabic or French. Every article must have appropriate title, subtitles and summary or conclusion.

Manuscripts should be sent in duplicate with softcopy in Microsoft Word to the Editor. They should be typed in double line space, font 13, on A4 paper with wide margin, not exceeding fifteen pages, references inclusive, using the APA format, and enclosing an assessment fee of N5, 000.00 along with the manuscripts.

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Role of Language and Religion in Combating Domestic Violence in Nigeria

By

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Abstract

It is not a concept but a fact that wherever and whenever people come together to achieve certain goal, there must be some misunderstandings by the way, because of differences in ideologies and perspectives which has to be settled to retain the togetherness and to make the set goal(s) achievable. The utmost goal of marriage is to promote love, peace and tranquility that would spread from the couple to the home, to the neighborhood, to the community, to the towns, to the cities, to the nation and to the world at large. It is not a gainsaying that language, culture and religion play enviable roles in actualizing marital peace and stability. However, it is observed that the rate of marital/domestic violence in Nigeria is alarming, a nation that is regarded as one of the most religious in the world, and characterized by numerous indigenous languages and rich cultural values. This paper therefore intends to bring forth some possible and bearable remedies to the problem of marital/domestic violence in Nigeria using internal mechanisms from language and religion to foster peace and tranquility.

Keywords: Domestic, Violence, Language, Religion, Culture.

Introduction

Domestic violence is defined as a pattern of abusive behaviors used by someone to establish power and control over another person in a relationship (Alwani &

Salma, 2012). Domestic violence is usually resulted to because of the absolute imbalance of power between husband and wife which sometimes is abused by either of the spouses coupled with society's tolerance (Alwani & Salma, 2012). Husband and wife, each has a specific roles and duties in building a sustainable home and family. This is because each gender has a special quality that allows each gender to be better qualified for a particular role. Naturally and basically, husband is in charge of the financial role of the house while the woman is in charge of the house generally, that is, what are to be financed. But this does not mean there shouldn't be help if the quality expected from either the husband or the wife is naturally or temporarily not in place. The wife can also contribute financially if she has the means to do so while the husband can also help in taking care of the house if the need be.

Cultural values for upholding

There are perceptions concerning the meaning of culture, the Advanced English Dictionary; defines culture as all the knowledge and values shared by a society. It can also be referred to as civilization. The aforementioned dictionary adopts civilization as a synonym of culture. A similar view of culture was shared by Merriam Webster, who submitted that culture is a way of thinking, behaving or working that exists in a place or organization.

From the above definitions, one could deduce one's submission that culture is the general way of life of a particular section of people of a particular place. It is noteworthy that culture travels far from one locality to another through language. In other words, language is the vehicle through which culture is spread from one community to another. Language and culture are inseparable; they go hook line and sinker.

Nigeria as a case study, Nigeria is a pluralistic society, being culturally heterogeneous in different ways. On the other hand the diversities of ethnicity, religious beliefs, philosophy of life, cultural heritage, socio-economic status provoke resistance and create insecurity, deepen intercultural suspicious and threaten the very unity and existence of a country or an organization (Lere, 2017). Every society has its own culture that caters for its citizens, which is specific and relatively integrative.

For the above reasons, therefore, it is established by Cicero and other Latin authors that, culture is the cultivation of soul or mind (cultural animi). So, the

human spirit will not achieve its proper results unless taught and educated with its society's culture (Lere, 2017).

Linguistic determinism holds that "language determines thought" our culture determines our language; language shapes thought.

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis produced arguments that the languages of Native Americans, such as the Hopi, led them to view the world differently from those who spoke European languages. It is not unusual to find aspects of language identified as characteristic features of African American culture or European culture or Japanese culture (George, 2010).

The following are some cultural values examined in this paper to foster peace and tranquility in Nigeria.

Language

Language is made up of sounds with which every community expresses itself (Ibn Jinni, 1952). It is a special characteristic that defines humanity of human being and distinguishes it from other forms of animals. It is the main means of communication. Language in action can be seen in terms of verbal, non-verbal and written media. Therefore, language and communication are sine qua non in this world of words and continued eruptions of conflicts or disputes. Language and communication, therefore, are very crucial in the management and resolution of conflicts or disputes between the two parties in conflicts.

Language use is largely affected by peoples' culture. If people of a particular culture are hostile, they tend to use harsh languages and vice versa, which may have negative impact on the recipient or partner. In African culture, language is either compared with sword or Kola-nut; it could be a reason for promoting peace and tranquility as it could also be a factor for waging war. Also in the whole world, language has the same impact. To buttress this fact, Mark Twain have once said "I can live for two months on a good compliment" while Solomon, the author of ancient Hebrew Wisdom stressed that "the tongue has the power of life and death" anxious heart weighs a man down but a kind word cheers him up (Garry, 2004).

Flowing from the above, Richard Davis, reported that when he addressed the lady of the house in which he worked as thou, "she took a stick and gave me such a blow upon my bare head, which made it swell and sore for a considerable

time. She was so disturbed by it, that she swore she would kill me (Romaine, 2000).

It is therefore recommended that, spouses, parents and children and every member of the family should carefully choose words that could quench further grief in dealing with one another.

***Oriki* [panegyric or family cognomen]**

Even in religion, culture cannot be ruled out as far as it does not contradict its rulings. As said that every society or institution has its own method of resolving violence. Among the major ethnic groups in Nigeria, particularly among the Yoruba, there is particular mechanism known as *ORIKI*.

Oriki, the 'panegyric or family cognomen' has been discovered to be a very important driving force. *Oriki* is an attributive descriptive in Yoruba language and culture. It is well established that it is expected of a wife to know how to eulogize her husband's family cognomen either when there is violence or there is not. Whosoever knows the value of something will surely gratify it. Eulogy is well valued in the Yoruba settings, that a wife-to-be is sent to her husband family to greet and eulogize them with the best nature of their preferred and specific eulogy.

In other to know the importance of this better, ability to render *Oriki* is – at times -spiritually sought for prospective wife because the Yoruba believe that a woman who wants to become an appreciated and beloved wife has to know and chant it well, in other to be used when needed, especially to arouse the spouse's interest. It was regarded as a taboo in the ancient Yoruba community for a wife not to know the family cognomen of her husband. The bride's parent believed their daughter lacks the marriage prerequisite without the in-depth knowledge *Oriki* (Ejide, 2020).

In this respect, spiritual brain boosting concoction was used for a Lagos based lady prior to her wedding day all in the name of memorizing the family cognomen of her husband without being taught, and as a result of this, it happened that the lady started eulogizing everything she saw on her way from Lagos - including the rivers along the roads to – Ilorin, her husband's town. (Ejide, 2020).

Mutual Respect

However, the objective of marriage is love, peace and development which must be mutually shared by both spouses while anything that has to jeopardize these objectives has to be aborted either in the name of culture or individual preference.

Hence, because of the superiority nature of a husband over his wife, it is greatly believed and compulsory for a wife to respect her husband in all aspects. This is because, as the Nigerian cultures imply, copying some western cultures like calling one's husband by his bare name without any form of respect is totally wrong and cannot be tolerated. In other for woman to address her husband with respect, she uses a plural form of pronoun for him and also extends that to his family members even the younger ones. She does not only use plural form of pronoun for a single person but also dares not call him or her by his or her name. She rather uses cognomens such as; *eyin funjowo*, (someone with sparkling teeth and wealth), *ibadi ileke* (someone with a waist decorated with beads) and the likes. Any wife that does this will be cherished and loved by all. Failure to do this will be titled RUDINESS which simultaneously can lead to absence of peace and absence of peace hinders development.

There is a surviving practice of respect for parents and elders and husbands in all the cultures found in Nigeria. Age is greatly respected in Nigerian cultures generally. It is considered rude not to engage in proper greeting before the elders. Shaking of hands, eating or passing objects with the left hand are generally unacceptable in all cultures in Nigeria (Ayanniyi, 2018). Kneeling down and prostration to greet are significant acts of respect in most Nigerian culture. This culture is faced with serious religious verdicts and westernization mantra. Islam is one of the recognized religions in Nigeria, what is its view on kneeling down and how has it affected the home peace?

Western and Islamic views on kneeling down to greet or beg

Just as the face is the index to the mind, in the same way the words of greetings which are exchanged among people indicate the spiritual role of a society. The gestures and the expressions of salutations are, therefore, the indicators of the ideal for which a particular society stands. The common practice with the pre Islamic Arabs and the modern west is to greet one another with 'Good morning' and 'Good evening' accompanied by a gesture of the hand or nodding of the head.

These practices by them have no spiritual and moral significance in Nigeria (Anwuluorah & Asike, 2015).

Hence, in order to understand the above topic, the two terms; culture and morality were defined below. The definition from which, it can be deduced that each society or an organization has its specific culture or civilization, Islamic and western world inclusive.

MORALITY; According to Advanced English Dictionary; morality can simply mean right or good conduct. According to Merriam Webster; morality can be defined as beliefs about what right and what wrong behaviors are.

Hence, there is distinction of morality between different states and organizations regarding their ways of doing things. And according to the introductory part of this work, it is stated that Africans believe there is lack of morality in the western manners of greeting which has to be restricted to them only as a culture that should not be emulated.

In the western world, kneeling down generally even to greet, not to talk of to beg, is nowhere to be found between even parent and children not to talk of husband and wife. This culture of greetings and other ways of life gave birth to many immorality acts found in the hock and nude of the country. Some other immorality acts like; suing one's parent, calling one's parent by their names and the likes.

Hence, this culture of western world is otherwise in the Islamic view of things because Islam preaches morality and respect in all forms.

In Islam, human acts are generally '*Ibaadah* (rewardable or punishable act of worship) but '*Ibadah* is of two types;

- (a) Direct worship of Allah
- (b) Actions of man which is between rewardable and punishable.

The first type of *Ibaadah* should be alone and only for Allaah while the second type attracts reward or punishment only, without the intention of worshipping Allah with it.

To explain further, a particular act can have the picture of one of these types of '*Ibaadah* or have the picture of both types of which kneeling down is among. Kneeling down to **BEG** or to **GREET** is totally different from kneeling down to

WORSHIP. As there is that big superiority between the Creator and the creatures, which attracts total submission to Him by worshipping Him, also there is that superiority between His creations due to many features like; age, piety, wealth, etc which attracts respect to the superior. Kneeling down for Allaah has its specific way which shows the sign of total submission to Him only and culturally kneeling down for a superior person, like husband, either to greet or beg shows the sign of respect.

Kneeling down in form of worship has been explained by the prophet (S. A. W) when he said thus;

"I was commanded to prostrate on my seven limbs...." (Bukhari, no. 770). So this type of prostration should be for Allaah alone. And in relation to respecting one's husband, the prophet emphasizes when he said;

"Had it been I have the authority to make someone prostrate (the one for Allah) I would have allowed a wife to prostrate for her husband" (Ibn Majah, no. 1842)

This Hadeeth expresses the ultimate type of respects a wife should give to her husband.

Hence, kneeling down to greet or to beg for peace to reign attracts no harm and for this reason, a woman can greet and beg on her kneel with this intention because the main objective of the Shariah is benefit for the Ummah.

The western modes of doing things specifically greeting and begging is totally repugnant to African culture and it is tagged as immoral acts from the wife to her husband or from the younger ones to the elderly ones, and must be restricted to them or probably when one is in their midst because Islam preaches morality and respect for all. Kneeling down to greet and to beg inculcates the spirit of humbleness and respect to all as conceived in Africa, and therefore recommended as trusted mechanism to combat domestic violence.

Islamic and Christian Antidotes to Domestic Violence

It must be clear that religion is never a cause of domestic violence rather it happens naturally (Steven, J, Saul, 2011). But religion, as a way of life, actually contributes and highlights immensely different ways of preventing this violence when it arises.

It is an established fact that all reasonable actions should be connected with reason(s) and purpose(s) of doing them. Hence, marriage is an action which has its purposes. The purposes of marriage in Islam include;

- (a) Fulfilling the conditions needed for living in tranquility and harmony;
- (b) Building family relationships and networks and;
- (c) Loving and having mercy over each other

These are stated in Q30 v21

"And of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest in them, and He put between you love and compassion; most surely there are signs for people who reflect"

Furtherance, Islam views violence in two ways;

1. The first type is the normal dispute between the spouses. Hence this can be prevented through;

- (a) Tolerance
- (b) Understanding
- (c) Sacrifice

2. The second type is the violence through a grave sin from the wife called (نشوز) like; *zina* (adultery) and the likes. Q4v34 talks about how to prevent this type of violence. It states thus,

"...And (as to) those on whose part you fear desertion, admonish them, and leave them alone in the sleeping-places...."

- a. Talking to them in form of sermon.
- b. Behaving in a strange ways to them by not eating, sleeping with them etc.
- c. Scare them easily like thinking, being harsh and lastly divorce, if it is out of hand, in order to avoid harm.

Hence, it is forbidden to skip one step and go the next without exhausting every possible aspect of the previous steps.

Christian Ways of Preventing Domestic Violence

Religion teachings can undoubtedly be a roadblock in stopping domestic violence (Perilla, 2006). Initially, churches show great concern in coming together of two people in a relationship through awareness and what is called **betrothals**. The church announces the future assumed married couple in the church to the followers in order to put sincerity in the heart of the assumed couple and to be more serious about it and to distance themselves from bad intentions of not intending to get marry but for fun only. The interest from the church before marriage continues in the stability of the marriage after marriage.

Hence, when there is violence which can destabilize or dissolve this marriage. Some ways are put forward to curb it;

1. Support and inspiration giving to the couple when in church.
2. Tolerance and understanding.
3. Bible teachings about loving woman as the love of God.
4. If this cannot prevent the violence, then divorce in order to prevent harming each other (Perilla, 2006).

"If a man strikes the eyes of his slave male or female, he shall let slave go free because of his eye and if he knocks out the tooth of his slave male or female, he shall let the slave go free because of his tooth". EXODUS 22:26 ;

Hence, religion as a way of life, that shows total care in guiding its adherents both spiritually and mundane.

Conclusion

Domestic violence is a big threat that must be uprooted to forestall peace and tranquility in our society. To achieve this enviable goal, this paper recommended three internal mechanisms to combat the menace. It was recommended that the best of languages is to be carefully used to ensure violent-free conversation, for every war emanates from language. The paper also recommended culture as a good weapon to combat domestic crisis, especially the Nigerian culture that is characterized with mutual respect.

Finally, Islam and Christianity are the two main religions in Nigeria from which many evidences were cited to combat domestic violence. We believe that

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each of the above internal mechanisms is capable of reinstating peace if carefully and sincerely applied to combating and eliminating internal chaos.

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