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GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND CHILD ABUSE THE NEED FOR COUNSELLING,

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ABSTRACT

The primary inequality that gives rise to gender-based violence is the power inequality between women and men. Violence against women and girls is a problem of pandemic proportions. At least one out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime with the abuser usually someone known to her. In the African society (Nigeria inclusive) the extended family system always provides love, care and protection to all children. With gradual alteration of the extended family system in the society through rapid socioeconomic and political changes, various forms of child abuse have been identified. Child abuse is a universal problem which cuts across all countries of the world, including Nigeria. This paper focused on domestic violence against women and child abuse. Facts about gender based violence worldwide, types of violence and its effects are highlighted. Also types of child abuse and effects on the life of children are highlighted. Trauma Focused Behavioural Therapy is recommended for treatment of both gender based violence and child abuse.

Keywords: Gender based violence, child abuse, counselling implication and therapy

Introduction

Gender based violence has been a problem breeds in silence and finds widely practiced for centuries unabatedly. Legitimacy through cultural norms. Over the The 1995 Fourth World Conference on last two decades, however, recognition of the

problem has increased. The Platform for Action adopted in Beijing sets out an agenda for eliminating and preventing the problem. In 1994, the Bureau of Justice Statistics estimated that about 92 percent of domestic violence cases involve female victims. Nineteen years after the Beijing conference was held there is still an increase in the rate of violence against women in Nigeria. Gender based violence is violence that is directed against a person on the basis of gender. It constitutes a breach of the fundamental right to life, liberty, security, dignity and equality between women and men. While women, girls, men and boys can be victims of gender based violence, the main focus of this paper is on violence against women and child abused.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that at least one in every five of the world's female population has been physically or sexually abused at some time (Population Reference Bureau, 2001). Gender-based violence arises from the patriarchal system which since time immemorial has exerted control over women's lives (World March of Women, 2000). Gender-based violence affects both the physical and psychological integrity of women. However subtle the violence may be in form, it has no less devastating effect. Gender-based violence can affect the female psychologically, cognitively and interpersonally.

Child abuse is the neglect of a child's survival and developmental needs, physical and emotional injury or harassment and the subjection of a child to measures, situations and experiences which interfere with a child's healthy development into adulthood (Obumneke, Anyachebelu, and Anyamene (2011). Child abuse may permanently alter the psychological well being of a child; following abuse, children display unusual high level of anger and aggression towards the oppressor. Gender based violence has led

to child abuse, since abused children grow up and become abusive adults. Perceptions of what constitutes child abuse have differed with time and culture. Practices that are now considered abusive have been accepted in the past as the normal exercise of parental rights, as economic necessity or as appropriate disciplinary measures (Jekayinfa, 2010). Crystal (1995) appeared to be in support of this when he defined child abuse as the treatment of the child in a way unacceptable to a given culture at a given time.

Concept of Violence and its prevalence

Violence is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation", but acknowledges that the inclusion of "the use of power" in its definition expands on the conventional meaning of the word. This definition involves intentionality with the committing of the act itself, irrespective of the outcome it produces. However, generally, anything that is exhibited in an injurious or damaging manner may be described as violent even if not meant to be violence (by a person and against a person).

Violence involves the use of physical force with deliberate intention of causing emotional trauma or injury to people which may eventually lead to death. Domestic violence is purposeful and instrumental behavior directed at achieving compliance from, or control over, the abused party. According to the United States Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women (VAW), the definition of domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to

gain or maintain control over another intimate partner. It is one of the most under-reported crimes in the United States, and the Department of Justice in 1998 estimated that there are between 960,000 and four million domestic incidents each year. A culture of silence surrounds cases of violence against women in most countries like Nigeria, making it difficult to get a true picture of its extent. Some of the reasons why it is difficult to get an accurate account is that most of the gender-based violence occur in the private sphere – within families, inside homes, and out of sight (Jekayinfa, 2010). The UN General Assembly, in adopting the 1993 declaration on the elimination of violence against women defined gender-based violence as

“any act of violence that results in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women; including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life” (Population Reference Bureau, 2001 pg. 3).

Women are vulnerable to violence at all stages of life. They are threatened by female infanticide, incest, child prostitution, rape, partner violence, psychological abuse, sexual harassment and harmful traditional practices such as forced marriage. Violence against women refers to any action that shows great or uncontrolled force on women or any action that treats women unfairly or differently in a bad way from other citizens of the country just because they are women. The law demands that no matter what cultural views may prevail, all women should be treated with honour and respect at all times. It is their God-given due (Awake, 2008:7). Those women who are particularly vulnerable to violence are those who live in extremely precarious conditions or who are discriminated against on the basis of race,

language, ethnic group, culture, age, opinion, religion or membership of a minority group. The World March of Women (2000), also included in the list of those that are affected by gender-based violence, women who are displaced, migrants, refugees or those living under foreign occupation. Gender-based violence affects both the physical and psychological integrity of women. However subtle the violence may be in form, it has no less devastating effect.

Forms of domestic violence

Domestic violence could take many forms and can take place at any time. In the context of this paper four forms of domestic violence shall be discussed. These are physical violence, economic violence, emotional violence, sexual abuse and marital rape.

Physical violence involved the physical contact between the aggressive and the victim who are into a relationship or family. The contact is intended to cause feelings of intimidation, pain, injury or other physical suffering or bodily harm. Physical violence includes but not limited to slapping, pushing, burning, hitting, punching, and pouring of liquid substance (water or acid) on the victim. It can also include denials of medical care when needed, deprivation of sleep or forceful injection of drug. This may result in organ deformation, injuries, abortion, and still birth.

Economic violence is the denial of access to economic resources in order to intimidate woman, or to force her to do something against her will. Economic violence may involve preventing a spouse from resources acquisition and limitation in the use of resources by the victim. The motive is usually to gain unlimited control of the victim by limiting capability and accessibility to advance in career, acquire assets, and have opportunity to qualitative

education and better income. This may result in inability to tap all talents, inability to cope after loss of spouse, dependence and destitution.

Emotional violence includes verbal assault, humiliation either privately or publicly, withholding of useful information, deliberately doing something to make victim unhappy or embarrassed, isolated from loved ones – friends or family. This form of violence causes depression which increase tendency to commit suicide, eating disorder and mental illness and instigate drug abuse by the victim in an attempt to overcome depression.

Sexual violence and marital rape is defined by World Health Organization (WHO) as any unwanted sexual comments or advances directed against a person's sexuality using coercion by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim in any setting. It is any situation in which force or threat is used to obtain participation in an unwanted sexual activity. Marital rape is non-consensual sex in which the perpetrator is the victim's spouse. As such, it is a form of partner rape of domestic violence and of sexual abuse. Many factors could cause family unhappiness leading to quarrels and eventual violence. The factors may be financial issue, care for children, suspicion, unfaithfulness, drunkenness, childlessness, poverty, nagging, intolerance and impatience.

Effects of gender based violence

The effects of Gender-based violence can be devastating and long lasting. They pose danger to a woman's reproductive health and can scar a survivor psychologically, cognitively and interpersonally (Jekayinfa, 2010). A woman who experiences domestic violence and lives in an abusive relationship with her partner may be forced to become pregnant or have an abortion against her will,

or her partner may knowingly expose her to a sexually transmitted infection.

Bitangaro (1999:9) reported what a child psychologist said that violence absolutely has impact on children. A child who has undergone or witnessed violence may become withdrawn, anxious or depressed on one hand; on the other hand, the child may become aggressive and exert control over younger siblings. Boys usually carry out this aggressive form of behaviour and as adults, may beat their spouses. The fourth world conference on women has adopted a platform for action, which declares that violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objective of equality, development and peace" (Population Reference Bureau 2000:3).

Facts about Gender-Based Violence Worldwide

- Around the world, at least one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused by a man in her lifetime. More than 20 % of women are reported to have been abused by men with whom they live.
- During war and civil conflict, women and girls are often targeted for special forms of violence by men as a way of attacking the morale of the enemy. The abduction of chibok girls is a vivid example in the Nigerian situation.
- Approximately 60 million women, mostly in Asia, are "missing" – killed by infanticide, selective abortion, deliberate under-nutrition or lack of access to health care.
- Among women aged 15-44 years, gender-based violence accounts for more death and disability than the combined effects of cancer, malaria, traffic-related injuries and war.

- Trafficking in women and girls for sexual exploitation by men is most common among poor women and girls.
- Each year, 2 million girls between ages 5 and 15 are introduced into the commercial sex industry.
- Women who are victims of domestic violence are 12 times more likely to attempt suicide than those who do not experience such violence.
- Based on recent studies, more than 130 million women and girls in Africa, Middle East and Asia, have undergone female genital mutilation and an estimated 2 million girls are at risk for undergoing the procedure each year.
- In Canada, the cost of domestic violence amounts to \$1.6 billion per year, including medical care and lost productivity. Estimates in the United States place this figure between \$10 and \$67 billion.
- Only 1 in 100 battered women in the U.S. reports the abuse she suffers. Every nine seconds, a woman is battered by her domestic partner.
- A 1998 study found that in the United States 1 out of every 6 women has experienced an attempted or completed rape. Of these women, 22 % were under 12 years old and 32 % were aged 12-17 at the time of the crime.
- Studies suggest that one-quarter to one-third of the 170 million women and girls currently living in the European Union are subjected to male violence.
- In European Union, it is estimated that 45% to 81% of working women experience sexual harassment in the workplace.
- In France, 95% of the victims of

violence are women, 51% of them are at the hands of their husbands.

- In Russia, half of all murder victims are women killed by their male partners.

Sources: Council of Europe's Equality Division, Summary of the Plan of Action to Combat Violence against Women.

Concept of child abuse

Child abuse is the physical, sexual or emotional maltreatment or neglect of a child or children. In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Department for Children and Families (DCF) defined child abuse as any act or series of acts of commission or omission by a parent or other caregiver that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child. In the Nigerian context, child abuse is defined as form of cruelty to a child's physical, moral or marital, wellbeing - a child being anybody of 18 years old or below (National Child Rights Implementation Committee, NCRIC, 1995). Child abuse can occur in a child's home, or in the organizations, schools or communities the child interacts with. Child abuse occurrence in Nigeria has received little attention. This is probably due to the emphasis placed on the more prevalent childhood problems such as malnutrition and infection. Various forms of child abuse have been identified, particularly in the urban areas. These may be considered as the outcome of abnormal interactions of the child, parents/guardians and society. They include abandonment of normal infants by unmarried or very poor mothers in cities, increased child labour and exploitation of children from rural areas to urban elite families, and abuse of children in urban nuclear families by child care givers.

Goldman, Salus, Wolcott and

Kennedy (2003) defined child abuse as any act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caregiver that either results in death, serious or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation or an imminent risk of serious harm on a child. Latimar, (2003) defined child abuse as the mistreatment of a child or a disregard for the developmental needs of a child by a parent or caregiver, resulting in injury, emotional or psychological harm or the potential for such harm.

In Western countries, preventing child abuse is considered a high priority, and detailed laws and policies exist to address this issue. Different jurisdictions have developed their own definitions of what constitutes child abuse for the purposes of removing a child from his/her family and/or prosecuting a criminal charge. According to the *Journal of Child Abuse and Neglect*, child abuse is defined as any act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm. Anukan (1986) analyzing the different kinds of child abuse, gave the definitions of five kinds of child abuse as, physical abuse, being a bodily injury which the parents or caregiver may inflict on the child. Emotional abuse may occur when the parent or caregiver is so dependent on the child that parental child role is reserved. Emotional neglect, this occurs when parents show no sign of love or hatred towards the child, thus, the child feels empty. Verbal abuse, which is the most commonly used, includes raising insults on the child. Sexual abuse on the other hand involves, using a child for sexual gratification. Olukoya, (2011) defined child abuse as the various acts perpetrated by parents, guardians, friends and older people against the child which literarily affects his/her physical, psychological and moral development.

Types of child abuse

There are several types of child abuse, but the core element that ties them together is the emotional effect on the child. Children need predictability, structure, clear boundaries, and the knowledge that their parents are looking out for their safety. Abused children cannot predict how their parents/guardian/care giver will act. Their world is an unpredictable, frightening place with no rules. Whether the abuse is a slap, a harsh comment, stony silence, or not knowing if there will be dinner on the table at night, the end result is a child that feel unsafe, uncared for, and alone.

Emotional child abuse

Emotional abuse can severely damage a child's mental health or social development, leaving lifelong psychological scars. Examples of emotional child abuse include: constant belittling, shaming, and humiliating a child, calling names and making negative comparisons to others, telling a child he or she is "no good," "worthless," "bad," or "a mistake", frequent yelling, threatening, or bullying, ignoring or rejecting a child as punishment, giving him or her the silent treatment, limited physical contact with the child, no hugs, kisses, or other signs of affection, exposing the child to violence or the abuse of others, whether it be the abuse of a parent, a sibling, or even a pet.

Child neglect

Child neglect is a common type of child abuse, it is a pattern of failing to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, or supervision. Child neglect is not always easy to spot. Sometimes, a parent might become physically or mentally unable to care for a child, such as with a serious injury, untreated depression, or anxiety. Other times, alcohol

or drug abuse may seriously impair judgment and the ability to keep a child safe. Older children might not show outward signs of neglect, becoming used to presenting a competent face to the outside world, and even taking on the role of the parent. But at the end of the day, neglected children are not getting their physical and emotional needs met.

Physical child abuse

Physical abuse involves physical harm or injury to the child. It may be as a result of a deliberate attempt to hurt the child, but not always. It can also result from severe discipline, such as using a belt on a child, or physical punishment that is inappropriate to the child's age or physical condition. Many physically abusive parents and caregivers insist that their actions are simply forms of discipline that is, ways to make children learn to behave. But there is a big difference between using physical punishment to discipline and physical abuse. The point of disciplining children is to teach them right from wrong, not to make them live in fear.

Child sexual abuse

Child sexual abuse is an especially complicated form of abuse because of its layers of guilt and shame. It is important to recognize that sexual abuse does not always involve body contact. Exposing a child to sexual situations or material is sexually abusive, whether or not touching is involved. While news stories of sexual predators are scary, what is even more frightening is that sexual abuse usually occurs at the hands of someone the child knows and should be able to trust, most often close relatives. And contrary to what many believe, it is not just girls who are at risk. Boys and girls both suffer from sexual abuse. In fact, sexual abuse of boys may be under reported due to shame and stigma.

Effects of child abuse and neglect

All types of child abuse and neglect leave lasting scars. Some of these scars might be physical, but emotional scarring has long lasting effects throughout life, damaging a child's sense of self, ability to have healthy relationships, and ability to function at home, at work and at school. Some other effects include:

- **Lack of trust and relationship difficulties:** Abuse by a primary caregiver damages the most fundamental relationship as a child, this corroborates the first stage of psychosocial development of Erickson that he called stage of trust versus mistrust. A child that his primary needs are unmet will find the world a wicked place. Without this base, it is very difficult to learn to trust people or know who is trustworthy. This can lead to difficulty maintaining relationships due to fear of being controlled or abused. It can also lead to unhealthy relationships.
- **Core feelings of being "worthless" or "damaged":** A child that is been told over and over again that he is stupid or no good would find it difficult to overcome these core feelings. Sexual abuse survivors, with the stigma and shame surrounding the abuse, often especially struggle with a feeling of being damaged.
- **Trouble regulating emotions.** Abused children cannot express emotions safely. As a result, the emotions get stuffed down, coming out in unexpected ways. Adult survivors of child abuse can struggle with unexplained anxiety, depression, or anger. They may turn to alcohol or drugs to numb out the painful feelings.

Implication for Counselling

Violence against women and child abuse phenomena are found to be manifesting in all sectors of the society and are found to be a massive social problem. Ignorance forms the major causes of gender based violence and child abuse practices. It is in view of this that counsellors are poised to stem this ugly tide. Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TFCBT) is an effective therapy that can be used to assist women who have experienced one form of violence or the other and abused children. TFCBT was first developed to treat sexually abused children but now used for victims of any kind of trauma. It targets trauma-related symptoms in adults and children including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), clinical depression and anxiety including a component for non-offending parents. Several studies (Swan 1998, Goldman 2003, Wilson 2012, Fang 2012) have found that adults and children suffering from different forms of trauma who are undergoing TFCBT improved more than those undergoing other therapies. The purpose of dealing with the thoughts and feelings associated with the trauma is to deal with nightmares, flashbacks and other intrusive experiences that might be spontaneously brought on by any number of discriminative stimuli in the environment or in the individual's brain. This would aid the individual in becoming less fearful of specific stimuli that would arouse debilitating fear, anger, sadness or other negative emotion. In other words, the individual would have some control or mastery over those emotions.

Conclusion

It is obvious that gender based violence (violence against women in particular) and child abuse are issues of concern universally. It can be concluded that

the problem of violence against women and child abuse whether occurring in public or private, constitute a human right violation. Based on the larger percentage of victims affected, there is the need for quick intervention especially by the government and counsellors in order to build a healthy environment.

Recommendations

1. Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TFCBT) should be given a wide recognition by professional counsellors to assist the victim of violence regain their self-esteem and actualization of life goals.
2. NGOs and similar organizations should organize campaigns on a regular basis, during monthly meetings to women and children at the grassroots level, and in urban and rural areas on the need to seek the help of professional counsellors on issues concerning them.
3. Government, NGOs, women groups should structure more stringent legislative initiatives and to develop sound, viable programmes that offer psychological and material assistance to the victims of violence and abuse.
4. Government should treat all forms of violence against women and child abuse as a criminal offence punishable by law.

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