

Short Communication

Domestic Violence in Homes; a Growing Concern, Can Family Life Education Be Useful

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Abstract: Domestic violence is now a serious concern in Nigeria as well as in other parts of Africa. The rate of domestic violence in Nigeria is on the increase and without any signs of decreasing. Women always encounter physical violence and the most common are rape, murder, slapping and kicking, there is a deep cultural belief in Nigeria that is socially accepted to hit a woman as a form of disciplinary action. Violence against women has long term consequences on the marital, physical and health of the nation, it is also silently destroying national development. The health of a nation is enhanced as long as the family remains as a stabilizing force in human societies, therefore the rights of women and children and should be protected and sacred.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Homes, concern, family, life, education, useful.

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is now a serious concern in Nigeria as well as in other parts of Africa. The rate of domestic violence in Nigeria is on the increase and without any signs of decreasing. According to the Cleen Foundation Reports (2013) one in every three respondents admitting to being a victim of domestic violence, the survey also discovered a National increase in Domestic violence in the 30% in 2013 and it is still on the increase and therefore requires an urgent attention because domestic violence is glowing like wildfire in Nigeria. We have different types of domestic violence against women in Nigeria are rape, acid attack, molestation, wife battering and corporal punishment (Noah, 2000).

Erinosho, (2004) stated that domestic violence binds all humanity because violence binds all humanity because it transcends natural boundaries. We have reports of domestic violence all over the world. Violence is not only confined to partners/wives but extends to children. Children not only witness the brutal attack against their mothers they are also used as human shield (Odejide, 2006). While Aina (2004) opined that domestic violence target at women is a global phenomenon that cuts across all cultures, religions and socio-economic groups, it also includes psychological violence repeated verbal abuse, harassment,

confinement and deprivation of physical and financial resources, it includes in a wider coverage, child abuse be it physical, psychological or sexual violence between siblings abuse or neglect of the elderly, abuse of children by parents, violence between members of the same sex in the family.

Women always encounter physical violence and the most common are rape, murder, slapping and kicking, there is a deep cultural belief in Nigeria that is socially accepted to hit a woman as a form of disciplinary action (Daily trust, 2013). Violence against women has long term consequences on the marital, physical and health of the nation, it is also silently destroying national development. The health of a nation is enhanced as long as the family remains as a stabilizing force in human societies, therefore the rights of women and children and should be protected and sacred. Aderinto (2004) confirmed that domestic violence exists in a culture of silence including denial of the seriousness of the health consequences. He observed our tradition undermines the ability of women to escape abusive relationships, for example parents of women must pay back the bride price if their daughter leaves the marriage. This means that, the origin of violence is rooted in the social structure, the complex sets of values, traditions, customs, habits and belief which relates to gender inequality, discrimination

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against women at the societal level is traceable to male authority and decision making in the home, rigid gender roles, definitions of masculinity that are linked to dominance or male honour. Economic inequality between men and women and the use of physical force for conflict resolution.

Domestic violence in homes is now on the increase, the quality of life in any family can never be enhanced where domestic violence exists because violence against women has serious effects on the health of women, children, physical reproduction and emotion. It also affects the economic life of the family and the nation by spending the available funds on sustaining and treating the victim of abused as well as the time, house, dignity lost during the crises.

Aderinto (2004) reported further that studies in Cambodia, Zimbabwe and India identified a constant list of events that can trigger violence and they are; talking back at your husband not preparing food time, failing to take adequate care of the children and home, questioning him about having girl friends, going out without his permission, refusing him sex or expressing suspicion of infidelity. He stated that the stigma associated with unmarried status, separation or divorce keep women in destructive marriages. The stigma also prevents them from reaching out for help. Violence against women takes different forms such as intimate partner violence including sexual, physical and psychological sexual violence, female genital mutilation, forced and early marriage and trafficking. Silva and Silva (2003) described domestic violence as any violent attitude or neglect within the family. The victim may suffer from all kinds of physical and mental problems including stress sleeping problems, social isolation, self destructive behavior, depression and phobias while some may even resort to committing suicide, poverty and lack of education may increase the level of domestic violence.

Bagshaw (2007) defined domestic and abuse as a situation where an individual in a marriage relationship demonstrates dominance and control over his/her spouse especially when it involves physical violence while Forest (2013) sees domestic violence as a pattern of behavior used to establish power and control over another person through fear and intimidation often including the threat or use of violence. Longbap (2012) listed the following as forms of family violence or domestic violence, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and economic abuse. He stressed that abusers adopt dominance, humiliation, isolation, threats, intimidation, denial and blame to gain and maintain control over their victims. Gbenda and Akume (2002) are of the opinion that in most cases husbands want to dominate and control their wives using the instrumentality of money while wives too are not only resisting this dominate and control but think they should rather be in a position to dominate and

control their husbands. An average Nigerian man often insist on a reasonable degree of respect and control as the head of the family which may or may not be hurtful to his spouse and children (Ukwueza, 2014). This cultural propensity or audacity is responsible for several family abuses and disharmony experienced in several parts of Nigeria. Kanu and Anyanwu (2006) asserted that domestic violence is occasional by excessive nagging by house wife, infidelity, lacking self disclosure, breakdown in communication apathy and inertia which are distress signal in marriage. According to Gbenda and Akume, (2002) these situations can often generate conflicts that usually results in violence if not handled carefully.

For proper handling of these conflicts that usually resort to domestic violence, family life education will be very usefully. Family life education is that aspect of health education which prepares the child, adolescent or young adults to become responsible members of their family. It helps the individual to understand his development, biologically, psychologically and socially to full maturity as a man or a woman. The objectives of family life education are;

- To understand the need to protect, preserve and to permanently improve family life.
- To understand the meaning of sexuality in personal and family life as a form of behaviour, a mode of inter-personal relationship in which biological social and cultural factors are involved.
- To acquire knowledge, attitude, skills, practices and habit conducive for healthy family life.
- To encourage the development of attitudes, ideals and standard of conduct essential to the full performance of the role individuals will be called upon to play in the establishment and orientation of a new family.

Udo et al., (1999) described family life education as a systematic attempt to prepare young people to understand human relationship and to perform responsibly their roles as both family members and community members. Therefore when people to understand their roles in the family understand human relationships and how to perform these roles responsibly conflicts that could lead to domestic violence will be checked. Each society has its own system of training for young people and of preparing them for appropriate roles in the family. This system of training also relates to the issue of choosing a spouse (Udo et al., 1999). Family life education teaches about courtship, marriage, what to look out for during the courtship period because it is better to break a courtship than marriage. Understanding yourselves during the courtship period knowing your don'ts and dos' before getting married will help to reduce unnecessary

conflicts in the home that could lead to domestic violence.

Sexual violence in Nigeria is mostly unreported because of the burden of proof necessary for conviction as well as the social stigma it brings to the individual concerned and their family members. Family life education should start early in life, especially understanding the objectives.

Factors Influencing Domestic Violence

According to Oyediran and Isiugo, (2005) the social context of violence in Nigeria is based largely on its patriarchal society. Violence against a wife is seen as a tool that a husband can use to chastise his wife in order to improve her. They concluded that the common loss of women's rights when they are married in Sub-Saharan Africa and the implicit obedience and deference towards men is socially encouraged within the society.

Marriage gives up a woman's right to herself, according to Ogunjuyigbe and Ebibola (2005) reported that the Yoruba women refer to their husbands as "Olowo Ori mi", meaning he who owns me. In practice where a bride price is paid, it is common for the husband to believe that by paying the bride price, he now owns his wife. The act of marriage is seen to give the husband full ownership of the woman, she surrenders the right of her body to him (Arisi, 2011).

According to Obi and Ozumba (2007) other factors linked to domestic violence are lower socioeconomic classes, substance abuse, couple age disparity and unemployment.

Perceptions of Domestic Violence

According to Oyediran and Isiugo (2005) the perceptions of domestic violence vary based on region, religion and class. The TIVs view wife beating as a sign of love, that it should be encouraged as evidenced with the state if you are not yet beaten by your husband then you do not know the joy of marriage and that means you're not yet married. All the ethnic groups in Nigeria; Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa have strong patriarchal societal structure that lead to the justification of domestic violence. However the Hausas are more supportive of domestic violence, viewing it as an inherent right of a husband (Kritz and Makinwa, 2006). There are differences in the perceptions of domestic violence varying across reasons. There are higher numbers for instance neglecting the children or going out without telling the husband and refusal of sex or a mere argument (Oyediran et al., 2005). Many of the reasons that are viewed as acceptable for domestic violence are largely subjective to a husband interpretation National Population Commission, 2008).

Responses to domestic violence or abuse varies, according to Noah (2000) women experiencing

domestic violence have varying responses and differences in who they report their abuse to, in a study done in Ilorin, Nigeria a large number of women reported their abuse to their family and friends while many decided to go to the police to file a report. The reason behind not going to the police are as a result of the fear of victim blaming, acceptance of violence as proper reaction and lack of action by the police. Anyways Ogunjuyogbe et al., (2005) pointed out that one major reason facing domestic violence issues in Nigeria are the tendency for low reported rates because study looking at domestic violence in South West, Nigeria found out that only 18.6 percent reported experienced or acted violence between themselves and their spouses.

Pregnant women also experience domestic violence. This was confirmed by Ameh and Abdul (2004) pregnant women experience high level of domestic violence in Nigeria and they are subject to violence not only from their spouses but also from their in-laws. In a study they found out that the most common type of domestic violence was to be physically assaulted and also be victim of forced sexual intercourse. A study carried out by Efelie and Salami (2007) in the Nation's capital Abuja over a course of three months showed physical, social and psychological abuse among pregnant women. One third of the female respondents reported experiencing domestic violence. They found psychological abuse to be the highest type of abuse followed by physical and then sexual. Women who experienced psychological abuse also experienced physical abuse in terms of physical abuse, about 20 percent of the women required medical treatment due to the abuse and the most frequent medical complications reported as premature labour. Overall the trends of domestic violence against pregnant women permeate across different ethnic groups and Nigeria states. The trends are consistent with other parts of Africa and the attitudes towards violence against pregnant women are in conjunction with the fore-mentioned trend viewing domestic violence as permissible under certain circumstances (Ameh and Abdul, 2004; Efelie and Salami, 2007).

There are laws on domestic violence Nnamdi (2012) asserted that while domestic violence is a violation of fundamental human rights which the Nigeria constitution is against. There are still provisions that make it illegal to engage in domestic violence against women. The provisions of the penal code is applicable in the Northern part of Nigeria, which specifically encourage violence against women. Underneath the provision, the beating of a wife for the purpose of correction is legal by the use of section 55(1) (d) of the penal code.

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