

WOMEN: THE BURDEN BEARERS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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Abstract

Domestic violence is that violence or abuse that happens within the domestic setting. It is used as a synonym for intimate partner violence, which is committed by one of the people in an intimate relationship against the other person. Domestic violence is a serious matter that must be addressed and dealt with in the contemporary society. It can take place between spouses, against children, parent or the elderly. It can be in multiple forms, which include physical, verbal, emotional, economic, religious, reproductive, finance or social. It is now becoming a great evil, immoral and a great monster in today's society and mostly affected are the women. When God created them, He created them male and female – Gen. 1:27 and co-equals because the woman was from the man's side not the head nor foot given them equal opportunities and level playing ground. But today, the world is male dominated in every aspect of life. Male rule and governed. Domestic violence is as old as humanity when Cain killed Abel – Gen. 4:8 because of envy, hatred, anger etc. This paper takes a critical look at different types of domestic violence, how the women are affected, and as the burden bearers. It will proffer solutions that will mitigate the effects of domestic violence on women.

Introduction

Domestic violence is as old as humanity. The very first time it occurred was in a nuclear family when Cain killed his brother Abel (Genesis 4:8), for no justifiable reason. Likewise, Jacob outsmarts his own brother Esau – Gen. 27. From thence domestic violence continued to expand and spread till date. Tamar the Princess of Israel, the daughter of King David and sister to Absalom was raped by her half-brother Amnon – 2Samuel 13). This contributed to Absalom's revolt against King David (2 Samuel 13). This was the first ever recorded raped and violence against a woman.

Little (1994) therefore argued that male violence is one of the major problems facing the women in the contemporary society. This could be in form of assault, abuse, or even rape. Mostly affected in the society are the women. When such happens, the affected women will feel insecure and withdrawn. Domestic violence against women and girl-child happens on daily basis and nobody seemed not to care or concerned. If there is any it is

not enough. Women are easily intimidated based on fear as such men dominated the world and exploit the situation against the women.

Women as burden bearers have six mountains at their backs. According to Maduka, (2006), these mountains include oppression from outside (colonialism and neo-colonialism), traditional structures (feudal, communal etc.), backwardness (formal and informal education), men themselves (patriarchal structure), colour (race, tribe, ethnicity, biological differences etc.) and the women themselves (self-infliction). The above are great obstacles and challenges facing the women leading to their abuses. Domestic violence therefore renders women helpless and vulnerable.

Domestic violence is that abuse of power in intimate relationship in the family and it is immoral (Kunliyop, 2008). In the man's dominated world, he flexes muscles against women as Adam tried to intimidate Eve in his failed responsibility (Genesis 3:12). The same is the case where women bear the burdens of men in the families and society. They are neither appreciated nor recognized. Their works in the family are hardly recognized or noticed.

Domestic violence occurs when the abuser believes or thinks he is entitled to it, or that it is accepted in the society, justified or unlikely to be reported or noticed. In some cases, it becomes an intergenerational cycle of violence in the children and other family members who often times feel that such violence is acceptable or condoned in the family or society. In many cases, the abuser sees it as nothing rather a way of life, tradition and control. As a result of this, the abused women may experience physical disabilities, deregulated aggression, chronic health challenges, mental disorder, limited finances, death etc. it has great negative impact on women, contributing to their vulnerability.

Causes of Domestic Violence against Women

Demonstration of Power and Control

According to Kunliyop, (2008), typical African man believes that woman is man's bonafide property. In order to prove this and for the man to uphold his image and ego both in the family and society, he will use his power to suppress the woman. He will never allow any insubordination by his wife. For him to maintain his manly power therefore, he will resort to physical and verbal violence against the woman as ways and means of authority and control. This attitude has reduced many women as meant to be seen and not heard in matters affecting the welfare of the family. Late Mrs. Osinachi Nwachukwu died on 8th April, 2022 as a result of domestic violence. Her husband, Peter Nwachukwu was alleged to have beaten her to death and he was arrested for his actions (Wikipedia, 2024). Her case was one out of many cases of violence against women by men leading to death

Sexual Abuse (Violence)

WHO defines sexual violence as any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances or acts to traffic or otherwise directed against person's sexuality using coercion. This also includes obligatory inspections of virginity, and female genital mutilation. Genital mutilation is partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

A survey conducted by Positive Action for treatment Access revealed that over 31.4% girls had their first sexual encounter through rape or forced sex. About 30% of Nigerian women aged 15-49 have experience sexual violence (<https://cseaafrica.org-8/4/24>). The rate of rape is on increase these days. Many of which are not reported where reported adequate actions are not taken against the abuser.

Incest or sexual contact between a related adult is a form of familial sexual violence that is common nowadays. Tarmar, daughter of David was a victim of this – 2 Samuel 13. She was raped by her half-brother, Ammon. She was desolate and traumatized when Ammon pressed Tarmar for sex which she refused citing the Law but as he was stronger than her, Ammon raped her after which, Ammon became angry with her and mistreated her, yelling at her to leave his room. At the end of the trauma, Tarmar was forced out of the room. The same is the case of rape cases in Nigeria today. Never a day is gone by without a case of violence against women in Nigeria. Man always assume to have right of sex with his wife any time he wishes. Should the woman show any resistance or unwillingness she may be verbally abused or even beaten (Kunhiyop, 2008). Never a day is gone by without the case of rape in the present-day world.

Emotional/Psychological Violence

According to Mannam *et al* (2005), Emotional or Psychological violence is a pattern of behavior that threatens, intimidates, dehumanizes or systematically undermines self-worth of women. Emotional violence is therefore an intentional conduct of seriously impairing a person's psychological integrity through coercion or threats. It includes minimizing, threats, isolation, public humiliation, unrelenting criticism, constant devaluation, coercive control, repeat stonewalling and gas-lighting. Webb in Maduka (2006) states thus, "They must get what they deserve.... Shoot them (women, 33); kill them, they can't stay without sex (Male, 23); give them (fatal) injection for AIDS (Male, 18) kill that person because he might transmit the disease to other people (female, 27), kill all of them (Male, 23) shoot them there is no curve..... You can do nothing for them (female)". The figures indicate number of males/females involved. It can easily be discovered that women are more in number that were either brutalized. The above are reactions and actions against the women in the society today. Ackermen *et al* (1991) argued that religion has been used psychologically to abuse women in the Church especially in Anglican Denomination.

Their number and participation notwithstanding they are less represented in the Parochial Church Committee (PCC) based on the Diocesan Constitution. Amina Lawal Kurami was sentenced to death by stoning for adultery and for conceiving a child out of wedlock. Amina was sentenced by an Islamic Sharia Court in Funtua in Nigeria on 22 March, 2002 (<https://en.m.wikipedis.org>). This same treatment is applied in John 8:1-11 where a lady caught in adultery and was brought to Jesus for sentencing. It takes two to tango. How can a woman commit adultery without man? Prophet Amos confirmed that two must agree - Amos 3:3. Though the lady violates the law but she should not be charged alone. The man was completely protected and the woman was publicly humiliated, dehumanized, intimidated and stigmatized. The victim was in depression and that could lead to suicide. Every woman of emotional violence never become of herself as long as she lives. This affects the integrity of the women involved both at home and in the public. She always lives in fears leading to isolation, name calling and stigmatization.

According to the Istanbul Convention (2013), psychological violence on women is the intentional conduct of seriously impairing of a person's psychological integrity through coercion or threats. It affects the integrity of the woman involved both at home and public negatively. She lives in fears at all times leading to isolation, name calling and stigmatization. Consequently, the woman may start to think of committing suicide. Emotional or psychological violence includes minimizing, unrelenting criticism, constant personal devaluation, coercive control repeated stonewalling and gas lighting. The commonest psychological violence against any woman is stalking. When such occurs, the victim tends to feel that her partner has gotten total control over her. This affects the power dynamic in the relationship, empowering the perpetrator (Man) and disempowering the victim (woman). The affected woman can easily experience depression, putting her into increased risk of eating disorders, drug and alcohol abuse.

Economic/Financial Abuse

Economic violence or financial abuse is a form of violence targeted at women especially those who have nothing doing for a living. As such man uses his economic resources to control the woman. Marital assets are used as a means of control. Economic abuse may involve preventing the women from resource acquisition, limiting what the women may get or use or by exploiting economic resources of the woman as was the case of late Mrs. Osinachi Nwachukwu where she was the bread winner while the husband Mr. Peter Nwachukwu was the controller of all her finances. Economic violence diminishes the woman's capacity to support herself, in such a situation she depends solely on her perpetrator - husband. When such occurs, it limits women access to education, employment, career advancement and also asset acquisition. Economic abuse is used as a close monitoring and spending of the women in the family. She cannot spend without her

husband's consent or approval no matter how small the amount will be. Any disagreement on money matter can result in with physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

Once an abused woman leaves her abuser, she will sooner than later face with reality of the extent to which she has been denied of her freedom and autonomy. Because of economic violence and isolation, the victim usually has little money she can call her own and few people on who she can rely on when seeking assistance. This is one of the most difficult challenges faced by the woman facing domestic violence in her own home. According to Wikipedia, "It has been reported that one out of every three women are homeless due to having left a domestic violence relationship, without financial capabilities. Such women who experienced domestic violence usually undergo occupational apartheid and isolation. They are easily and always stigmatized at home and in the public leading to them having very few friends and support groups for help. Such women are seen as never do well".

Alcohol and Substance Abuse

Men who abuse alcohol or drugs usually abuse women violently. Kunhisyp (2008) argued that in their state of drunkenness or influence of the drugs they are unable to tolerate any disagreement from any women including wife. Such men view and interpret every action as insulting or insubordination and response is usually violence. Since an addict is impaired in memory, difficulty in thinking lacks proper co-ordination and poor judgment the only option left with him is self-infliction leading to anger. As this steps in his anger will turn into violence. An addict often engages in fights and violence – Prov. 23:29-35.

Patriarchal System

According to Maria (1998) patriarchy literally means the rule of the fathers. But today male's dominance goes beyond the rule of the father; it includes the rule of husbands, of male bosses, of ruling men in most societal institutions, in politics and also economies. In summary, this is a man's world where women are subjected to the background. In the man's world, women are meant to be seen and not heard. The above notion is from the pit of hell. Women should be seen and heard.

The above had negative effects and impacts on women (Maduka, 2006; Rathgeber, 1990; Moses, 1993 and Reddock, 2000). Under the patriarchal system therefore men organize themselves so as to enable them manipulate women. This has resulted in the women being totally subjected to the men who in turn use them as properties in the household. Since this is the case, the common language of man in the home is violence because he sees his wife as subordinate, deputy who has nothing to contribute or offer

In the patriarchal society, women are not free to express themselves. They have no right to say NO in terms of rape, sexual intercourse or in the face of health challenges. On no account will she say No and where she does, she will be dealt with a brutal beating and violence.

From Maria:

Violence and coercion seemed to be the main mechanisms by which the unequal power relation in the area of body politics was maintained. Women discovered more and more that their own bodies had been alienated from them and had been turned into objects for others, had become occupied territory. Many began to understand that male dominance or patriarchy, as its then began to be called, had its origin not in the realm of public politics only but in the men's control over women's bodies, particularly their sexuality and their generative capacity (1998:25).

In most cases, violence, rape, and beatings are the language of men towards women (Maduka, 2006). These are techniques men have adopted as means of subduing the women and bringing them into total submission, which actions take place, the only available option for the women is to succumb to the situation. This kind of life style is common amongst the blacks where many people lack adequate information on human rights. Even when they have the right, they cannot act because of tradition, custom and women themselves (Umuada) will prevent them. Women therefore tend to die in silence rather than exposing their husbands to the public.

Tradition

Boserup (1970) stated that the traditional practices are formed from gender perspectives have negative impact on women. These practices lead to polygamy in most African countries (Ogundipe-Lesile (1994)). Polygamy as a practice that makes women look cheap before men. It has reduced their status by making them beasts of burdens both at home and in the society (Maduka, 2006). The sole aim was and still is to use them as cheap labour on their husband's farm and warehouses. Traditionally, women have no power to say "NO; to their husbands in relation to sexual practices (Haddai, 2002). Since men is polygamous in nature when the contracts any (STD) sexual transmitted disease, the women will be the one to be blamed and will take care of the man.

Tradition of people has created three main functions for every woman. There are reproduction, production and community management (Moser, 1989 and Besha, 1994). Therefore, women traditionally are meant to bear children and take care of the family man's presences notwithstanding. They are required to participate in farming and any other business of the husband but accounts to the husband at the end of the day if there is

any proceed from her labor. They are also required to participate in informal income generating sectors like daily contributions for the welfare of the family. People's traditions have ensured that both men and women operate differently in the spheres of life. Men dominated the world of production. This has led to the productive roles of the women being under-rated while their reproductive and community involvement are completely ignored (Moser, 1993). Besha (1994) argued that the tradition and customs of the people are instituted by and implemented by men and encouraged women to obey and accept their situations without questioning. Age-long tradition and customs in most tribes prepare a young female adult to accept without question all responsibilities handed down to her as per rigorous initiation ceremonies where women are taught the joys of marriage and motherhood and how to keep their husbands happy including genital mutilation. The major outcome of customs and traditions are geared towards perpetual subordination of women in the family and society in general. The so-called traditions and customs contributed in dispossessing women their rights to own and discuss land matters. In simple term, women are brainwashed and they accept the situation as normal. Presently it has become a way of life for peace to reign. For this reason, men will decide what will happen in the home and society terming such as tradition of their fathers.

Culture

Besha (1994) described culture as a way of life and as one of the major problems facing women both at home and in the society. It is used as a means of oppression and humiliation of women both at home and society. The process of oppression and humiliation starts from the moment a baby girl is delivered. A woman who delivers a girl gets poor maternity care and no one pays much attention to her. When a woman delivers a baby boy, however, a big goat will be slaughtered to announce the birth and the mother will get excellent care. On the very first day of delivery a baby boy is valued more than a baby girl. This is equally applied to the mother. Culture has made man superior to woman but not so from the beginning for God created them both equal. Both man and woman have internalized this fact. It is against the societal norms when one acts contrary to the above. Culture has contributed in making women vulnerable both at home and in the society. This is so because people attached much importance to their culture. The culture of the people protects the interests of men more than the women in the society. When this occurs, men utilize the opportunity to exploit the women. This attitude leads women dependent on men resulting in violence in any slightest provocation or mistakes. Cultural barriers are still one of the great constraints for every woman that easily led to violence at home.

Culture is male oriented and designed to protect the male's interest at the expense of the women (Maduka, 2006). Haddad, (2002) stated that cultural practices like bride price and

polygamy contribute to the women's vulnerability. She went further to state that "Women indicate that they are often treated by their husbands as if they were owned because men paid bride price in order to marry them". Culture is therefore an agent of oppression of the women including violence like beating or verbal abuses or name calling in the family. As far as culture is concerned, women have no say as regards the issue of marriage, payment of dowry and land matters. With culture, therefore, women are seen as commodity in the open market (Besha, 1994).

Physical Violence: The Ottawa Women's Monument (1992) stated that this monument was established in memory of the women who suffered domestic violence. Their degree of sufferings varied from bruises, broken bones, head injuries, lacerations and internal bleeding (Journalist 101; www.kwikattorneyes.com; www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/details/violence-againstwomen). Channels TV (May 3, 2024) reported that a Nigeria Police Officer in Plateau State of Nigeria cut off his wife's left hand because of a little disagreement between them. The officer, Ibrahim Shagari not considering that his wife, Hauwa Shagari was heavily pregnant went ahead and acted wickedly. Likewise on May 2, 2024, Anambra State Government intervened and arrested two men for beating up a girl of 16, Chioma Okoli who was forced into marriage of 70-year-old man. Not only beating, the girl but do urinate into her mouth at will. Late Mrs. Osinachi Nwachukwu died from injuries sustain from her husband, Mr. Peter Nwachukwu. Many women are passing through hell in the name of marriage. Many had died because of internal injuries while some had irreversible scars and marks like Mrs. Hauwa Shagari.

Health: Women who are victims of domestic's violence often suffer from diverse health challenges. Some of these challenges include constant headache, abdominal pelvic pains and fatigue. They often contracted sexually transmitted (STDs) diseases and infections that include HIV and AIDS. In some cases they suffer pregnancy related sicknesses including abortion. The victims do equally suffer from mental related issues such as depression and stress, which leads to stroke. With impaired skin integrity the victims develops low self-esteem. She lacks proper coordination because anxiety, fear and fatigue, which will invariably lead to cardiac diseases. The life of any woman that is undergoing domestic violence is at risk and endangered. Health wise, domestic violence against women leads to unintended pregnancies and gynecological complications. Such implications include still birth, gastrointestinal disorders limited mobility and poor overall health. The poor women have no other option than to accept sexual assault even when she is sick.

Social Isolation: Women facing domestic violence are socially isolated in the public. They are called names, rejected and dejected in the society. Such women withdrew from social activities in the community, because of fear, anxiety and shame. They are helpless

because they are in hopeless situation and cannot speak out their ordeals or seek for help or assistance. The victims is subjected to public ridicule and laughing stock. This situation leads the victim to depression which can have both emotional and health impact in the victim negatively.

Stereotyped Violence (Femicide)

UN Women (2022) state that femicide is the intentional killing of a women or a girl because she is a woman or a girl. It is a gender related motivation based on gender stereotyped roles, discrimination towards women, to unequal power relations between women and men in the society. This is most extreme and brutal manifestation of violence against women. Stereotyped violence against the women can take place both in private and public places and times. This includes harassment, trafficking, forced labor or even slavery. Because of stereotyped attitude towards women, they are seen as sub-humans. They are denied respect both at home and in the public; after effect of which self-denial, withdrawal and isolation are among.

Global and Regional Estimates of Domestic Violence against Women

Domestic violence against women is not new, its effects on women is equally not new. According to WHO (2013), what is new the grouping recognition that acts of violence against women are not isolated, events but rather form a pattern of behavior that violates the rights of women and girls, limits their participation in society and damages their health and wellbeing. From the above statement therefore, domestic violence against women is a global issue that affects many women worldwide. Below is the global rate of the violence.

The prevalence estimates of domestic violence based on available global data obtained from 79 countries, African, Eastern Mediterranean and South-East Asia Regions is about 37% of women had experience domestic violence. America has about 30% while Europe and Western Pacific regions have about 25%.

WHO REGION	PROPORTION OF WOMEN REPORTING INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE %
Africa	45.6
America	36.1
Eastern Mediterranean	36.4
Europe	27.2
South-East Asia	40.2
Western Pacific	27.9

From the table above, it can easily be seen that Africa has the highest prevalence of domestic violence. The reasons include the violation of human rights, low educational level and poverty.

Recommendation to Mitigate Domestic Violence against Women

Education

Camre Stated thus:

The Arab declaration to WSSD, adopted by the Arab ministers for development, planning and environment at the Cairo preparatory meeting urged that greater emphasis be given to the education of the women and to strengthening social programmes to raise the level of awareness of the importance of family planning and childcare (24 – 25 October, 2001).

The above assertion was based on the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) Agenda 21. According to Maduka (2006), Agenda 21 stressed the importance of women's education as a way forward to sustainable development. Educating women is a key factor in mitigating domestic violence. It will enable them acquire necessary skills, perspectives, values and knowledge to live a more meaningful life than rearing children alone. Education will enable the women to be independent of their husbands financially.

UNESCO (2005) stated that education of women and girls is an essential element of empowerment and emancipation. A good qualitative education, designed on this basis will eventually build their capacities, capabilities and offer them opportunities in public and at the household levels in the likes of Prof. Ngozi Okonjo-Iwuala, Late Prof. Dora Akunyili, Dame Virgy Etiaba etc. Though women but are above domestic violence because they were highly educated. Neither men nor society intimidate or bully them. They can easily take proper care of themselves in every human endeavor because of education.

Kunhiyop (2008) stated that there is every need to communicate through education to both boys and girls at a young age that domestic violence is morally unjust. In fact, boys need to be educated that they are not in any way superior to girls (Prov. 22:6). Proper training will reshape the mindset of boys. They need to be taught that women are to be respected and treated with dignity. Monkman (1998), therefore, stated that education is very important in expanding human capabilities such as reading, writing, knowledge and acquisition of basic skills. It therefore offers people the opportunities for better paid jobs in order to gain economic independence. Education is therefore important in the fight against domestic violence against women.

Empowerment

With regard to women who are faced with domestic violence, there is every need to empower them in all spheres of life. These include empowerment through politics, economic environmental, social, cultural as well as other fields of human endeavor (Ife, 1995). Stromquist (*ed*) (1998:160) stated that the empowerment of women enables them to negotiate safer sexual practices, which they are exposed to and even to refuse unsafe sex. This could be done through education and training, support groups and promoting micro-enterprises activities. Empowerment is a process through which disempowerment women and groups gain the power to control their life and the ability to make strategic life choice,” (Monkmam, 1998:499). Empowerment in a nutshell means shifting the emphasis from things (projects) to people. That means task-orientation changes to people-orientation. Empowerment seeks to restore women some of the things they were initially deprived of. These are participation, self-reliance, and mobilization. Empowerment as a multidimensional process, it works at various levels in an effort to achieve its objective in making women live a better life

Chamber (1997) contributed immensely toward understanding empowerment through participation. He did this through the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques discussed in some of his works. Such participation has moved a step forward to what is presently called Participatory Learning Action (PLA). The Participatory Learning Action is referred to as development strategy that will help women regain their lost freedom and story. “Women participation in projects provides them with several benefits and opportunities as individuals and groups. This involves the mobilization of both human and natural resources that are available (Maduka, 2006). Again, participation is very important in the planning and implementation of projects and finally it will enable them improve in the maintenance of their assets and infrastructure through their own local resources, contributions and management. Participation therefore contributes to local experiences in providing local services and thereby stimulates development of other projects within that will the women be dependent.

Legislation

The most commonly used provision of criminal law in dealing with cases of violence against women is in Section 383 of the Criminal Code of Nigeria. The provision prescribes a maximum punishment of three years imprisonment on conviction for assault (May 30, 202008). The punishment is not adequate enough to checkmate the menace of domestic violence. A stiffer punishment and penalty should be in place. Adequate legislation which criminalizes domestic violence against women will go a long way to reduce the act. Proper legal system should be in place to provide core to the women and

girl child both at home and community, when good laws and adequate punishments are made without option of fine that will help in reduction of domestic violence.

Marriage Counseling

In marriage counseling, the counselor will create enough time to talk on marriage and equality between of the spouses. During the course, the couple should see themselves as co-equals. None is more important than the other for God made it so. That is why God created women from man's rib given them equal playing ground.

Women Support Group

There should be National Domestic Violence Hotline. If created, the group will provide confidential support and valuable resources for domestic violence survivors. Such group will be led by highly trained advocates who should be equipped to handle people undergoing crisis in their homes and need proper support.

Conclusion

Domestic violence against the woman is one of the most prevalent human rights violations in the society today. In whatever form it comes is a total manifestation of historically unequal power relationship between men and women which has been domination of power and discrimination against the women by men leading to the prevention of full advancement of women in all human endeavors. This act perpetrated against the women cause them physical, spiritual, sexual, psychological and economic harms. The acts come in diverse forms including but not limited to threats, or imposition of arbitrary restrictions on or deprivation of fundamental human freedoms and justice both in private and public life of the victim. All hands must therefore be on deck to address this monster ravaging the present-day society. Domestic violence in a criminal act done by evil people as such it must be handled with equal magnitude. That being the case all must collaborate to achieve the desired results of women living as people created in God's own image.

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