

Domestic Violence: A Cause of Broken Homes

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Abstract: Domestic violence is a common and a universal problem which cut across societies the world over. It is however, viewed differently but the general point is that it is a violence that occur at home among or between people related marriage or blood. This kind of violence seems to be either toward the children, the old persons, the wife, the husband or any relative staying in the family. Various dimensions of domestic violence exist which ranges from physical violence, sexual violence, psychological/ emotional violence, financial abuse and spiritual abuse. Reasons for domestic violence may be as a result of cycle of violence, socio-economic status, social and structural, social isolation and community embedded, low self-concept and personality problems.

Keywords: Domestic, Violence, Males, Females, Children.

I. INTRODUCTION

Different understandings exist for the term domestic violence, however they generally refers to violence that occur in the home among people related by marriage or by blood. According to Edwards (1996) domestic violence characteristically includes acts of physical and mental cruelty progressing from a slap or shove, to a punch or kick, and to the more extreme manifestations of violence, in suffocation, strangulation, attempted murder and murder. The prefix 'domestic' serves to neutralize the full horror, viciousness and habituation of the violence. It refers to different types of abuse of various scales such as child abuse, intimate partner abuse, elder abuse, and abuse of the siblings. Such may include acts of physical violence (slap, punch, strangle, rape etc.); psychological trauma, threatening, coercive conduct; interference with the personal liberty of the victim; or includes the forcible entry of the victim's residence against their will many types of abuse, such as child abuse, intimate partner abuse, elder abuse, and sibling abuse. Domestic violence includes acts of physical violence (slapping, punching, strangling, rape, etc.); psychological trauma, threatening, coercive conduct; interference with the personal liberty of the victim; or includes the forcible entry of the victim's residence against their will, (Nevada Network Against Domestic Violence , 2012) Domestic violence can take various dimensions, ranging from physical assault, sexual abuse or psychological abuse which is only known some time with the death of the abused person or the perpetrator of the abuse. Domestic violence is actually an act that is not peculiar to any particular socio-economic group or culture but it cut across all cultures and groups, (Lockton, 1996). In order to fully understand the horrors pass through by the victims of domestic violence, there is the need to examine the general manifestations of domestic violence. Domestic violence is generally applicable to all irrespective of gender or age,

however, certain categories of people such as women and children seems to be highly vulnerable to domestic violence.

As reported by the United States Violence Policy Centre, 2012 that:

- a. One in every four women and one in every seven men were victims of severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetimes (NISVS, CDC 2010)
- b. Women are more likely to victimize by current or former intimate partners (DOJ 2007-2008). It also revealed that 84 percent of women were victims of domestic violence while three-fourth of those committing domestic violence were males.
- c. Women of all ages are at the greatest risk of domestic and sexual violence particularly those within the ages of 20-24 years.
- d. Technology has also become a quick way through which victims are harassed easily.
- e. In a study conducted 44 percent of victims tend to report to someone about the violence they passed through while 37 percent of the victims share the issues with their health care providers and 70-80 percent of victims will prefer a private discussion with the health care provider on domestic violence. (Futures Without Violence Fact Sheet on Health Care and Domestic Violence, posted 2012)
- f. Almost one-third of female homicide victims that are reported in police records are killed by an intimate partner (FBI Uniform Crime Reports "Crime in the United States, 2000.") In 70-80 percent of intimate partner homicides, no matter which partner was killed, the man physically abused the woman before the murder. (Campbell et al, "Assessing Risk Factors for Intimate Partner Homicide." Intimate Partner Homicide, NIJ Journal, DOJ 2003)
- g. According to a study published by the Violence Policy Center in September 2012, Nevada ranked 1 of women murdered by men for a third year in a row. Nevada has held this top spot for five of the last six years. For additional statistics relating to the incidence of domestic violence and services provided in Nevada, please visit the Nevada Network Against Domestic Violence website at www.nnadv.org. NNADV compiles statistics submitted by domestic violence community-based advocacy programs across Nevada in their quarterly newsletter, The Network News.

II. DIMENSIONS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is generally wide in range which comprises serious violence and more subtle behaviors. However, both categories yield similar results of oppressive and compulsive effects. While individual incidents are of importance and worthy of being addressed, it is the pattern of continued violent, oppressive, and manipulative behavior that usually reaches the attention of authorities (Buzawa & Buzawa, 2003). The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention considers behavior which is classified as domestic violence in to five categories: physical, sexual, threats of physical and sexual, psychological/emotional, and stalking (Saltzman et al., 2002):

Physical violence

This involves behaviours like kicking, slapping, shoving, hitting, punching, restraining, pushing, confining, scratching, confining, throwing things at a person, threatening or attacking the person with a weapon locking the person in or out of the house or abandoning the person in a dangerous place, refusing to provide assistance when the person is injured, sick, or pregnant, breaking bones, burning, and murder, (Rose, 2010).

Sexual violence

This has to do with raping or threatening to rape a girl or a woman, forcing a girl or woman in sexual intercourse without her consent, forcing a woman to wear clothe that she doesn't want or make her uncomfortable against her wish

Psychological / emotional violence

This form of violence is common which has to do with raining insults on victims, calling the person all sort of names, ridiculing the person, ignoring such victim, intimidating and controlling behaviors of the person, making false accusations against the person, threatening the person and her/her family, yelling or screaming at the victim without justification,

continued harassment, publically embarrassing the person, mocking the person, engaging in criticizing everything the person does, distrusting the person's decision making, shifting blames for whatever that goes wrong, and compelling the person stay in the house despite the fight (Rose, 2010).

Financial or material abuse

His happens when a some prevent the partner from securing a job takes and spend the money of the partner without approval or without the consent of the partner, destroys the possession of the partner, hiding financial information from the partner and spending most of the family income on oneself and expect the other arty to account for every single penny.

Spiritual abuse

This involves situation where one person uses the religious or spiritual practice in order to manipulate the other, prevent the other from Spiritual or religious practice.

It should however, be noted that most of the persons that suffer from such domestic violence in almost all parts are women and children who are perceived to be generally weak and passive in the domestic relationship. Even in sub-Saharan Africa it is clear that as a result of relative social organization and patriarchal nature of the societies and families, the overwhelming majority of the victims of domestic violence in Sub-Saharan Africa are women and girls (Okereke, 2006). It also stresses the point that the "family" in the traditional African context often includes members of the extended families of the couple as well as other females who serve as house maids, caregivers, or babysitters, all living in the same household. This does not mean men are not victims of domestic violence, but women suffers more as victims of domestic violence, which can be confirmed by the Canadian report on domestic violence where higher number of females admitted being maltreated by men then the other way round as shown on the charts below:

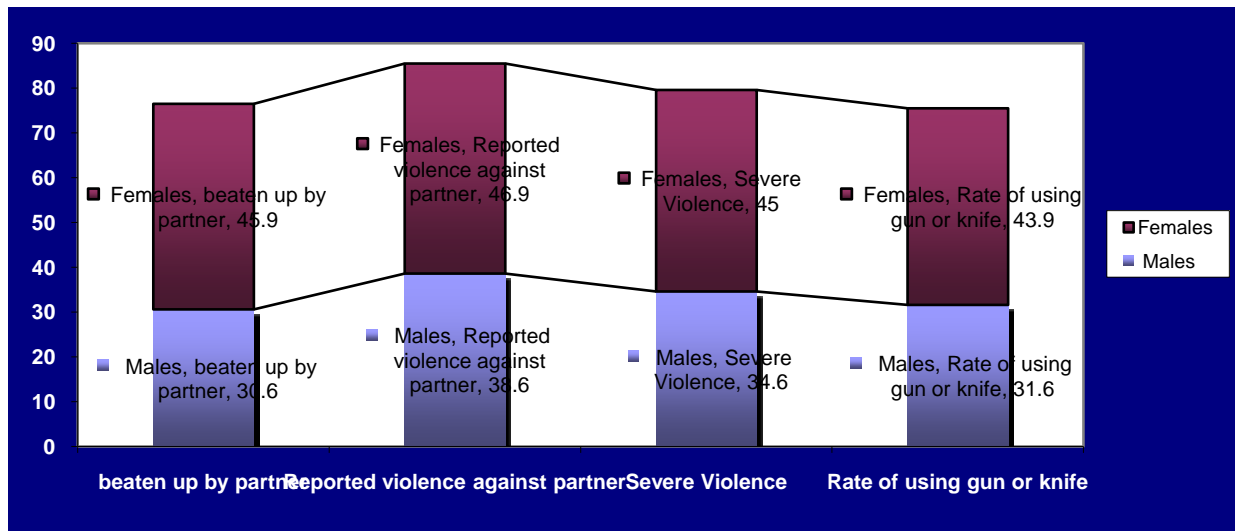


Figure 1.1: comparing of male and female domestic violence based on Canadian report

III. REASONS FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In his views on domestic violence, Gelles (1997) states that domestic violence emanates from various sources which are related to the following:

- a. The cycle of violence
- b. Socio-economic status
- c. Social and structural stress
- d. Social isolation and community embeddedness
- e. Low self-concept
- f. Personality problems and psychopathology

However, a number of researchers (Clifton, 1982, Smith, 1989, and Hague and Malos, 1993) have identified significant number of factors which are responsible for domestic violence and can be classified as:

- a. Pathological factors: here early research considered those who embarked on act of domestic violence as persons suffering from mental illness and thus have pathological problems. Early scholars like (Pizzey, 1974 and Gelles, 1978) were of the view that many partners engaging in domestic violence as exhibiting pathological jealousy. However, smith suggested that most of the researches involving pathological causes used inadequate samples which
- b. Social factors
- c. Cycle of violence
- d. Feminist factor

As observed by (Felson, 2002), People use violent behavior (the use of physical force or coercion) for three basic reasons:

1. to change or alter the behavior of another in order to suit their own purposes
2. revenge, retribution, jealousy, or seeking justice for a real or perceived wrong
3. to defend or advance their perceived standing in the family or community

IV. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE LAW IN AFRICA

The encyclopedia of domestic violence states that, domestic violence is a form of aggression perpetrated by a family member or an intimate partner, usually male, on another family member or partner, usually female. It has also been stated by Amnesty International (2004), that, domestic violence is a problem the world over and affects one in every three women; this translates into approximately one billion women who have been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in their lifetime. However this does not automatically translate in to subscribing to the point that women are the only negative recipients of domestic violence but men children and the old suffers from domestic violence sometime even more than women do. Such problem appears particularly pernicious in Africa, due to the fact that both international and regional human rights and gender-sensitive documents are yet to be implemented by most governments on the continent (Human Rights Watch 2002).

In West Africa only five countries such as has a law which specifies one to five years imprisonment for persons who violated domestic violence law which in their own case is specifically for the protection of women as they are the most vulnerable parties. Ghana and Nigeria have since designed laws which declare domestic violence as illegal too (Human Rights Watch 2005). It is clear that, the constitutions and sometimes civil laws of the various West African countries guarantee equality before the law and forbid discrimination based on sex, race, religion, class, ethnicity, or language; despite this, women and children in particular continue to experience extensive societal discrimination, especially in rural areas, where women generally are confined to traditional roles.

Agrarian reforms in some countries like burkina fatso spells out equality among men and women in terms of land distribution and ownership such policies have not come to stay fully. In some countries marital rape is considered as an offence but is highly tolerated under the traditional customary system. In Nigeria, for example, the Penal Code permits husbands to “correct” their wives as long as such “correction” does not result in grievous harm, which is defined as loss of sight, hearing, power of speech, facial disfigurement, or other life-endangering injuries (Women’s International Network 1998). In this connection police in Nigeria do not intervene in domestic violence usually called family affairs unless it is considered so grievous (Amnesty International 2004).

In some cases also the law discriminates against women in the manner in which it punishes people who assault others. For example, as it appears in the Criminal Code for Southern Nigeria, there exist different sentences for the crime of assault taking in account whether the victim of the attack is a man or a woman. An assault on man is regarded as a felony and may carries a prison term of three years, a similar assault on a woman is a misdemeanor and carries a prison term of two years (Amnesty International 2004). Such anomalies if not corrected and applied appropriately will continue to remain a key problem in dealing with domestic violence.

V. METHODOLOGY

This paper is a conceptual paper which is generally built on the work of other writers, in simple term it is a review paper. We therefore explore the work of others in writing this paper where our positions are articulated by merger or departure. It is in this connection that several literatures were reviewed collecting ideas from different parts of the world on the issue of domestic violence.

VI. CONCLUSION

As stated earlier domestic violence is a problem which is not peculiar to any geographical environment but rather a global phenomenon. It is equally not age or sex specific, it is clear that children are more vulnerable in terms of age while women are more vulnerable in terms of sex. Although

governments at various levels might be procreating the seed of fight against domestic violence, adopting the change may remain a very serious task that demands commitment of the government, the agencies of governments and the generality of the population.

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