

Exploring the Role of Social Support in Mitigating Domestic Violence in Old-Age Marriages in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is a pervasive problem in Nigeria, affecting individuals of all ages and backgrounds. However, research has shown that older adults may be particularly vulnerable to abuse, as they are often socially isolated and dependent on their partners for care and support. In this context, social support has been identified as a potential protective factor against domestic violence. This paper explores the role of social support in mitigating domestic violence in old age marriages in Nigeria. Drawing on a review of existing literature, the paper examines the various forms of social support that are available to older adults, including emotional, instrumental, and informational support. It also considers the ways in which social support can be mobilized to prevent and respond to domestic violence, such as through community-based interventions and support groups for survivors. The paper highlights several key findings. First, it notes that social support is a critical resource for older adults in preventing and coping with domestic violence. Second, it emphasizes the need for more research on the specific types of social support that are most effective in preventing and mitigating abuse in old age marriages. Third, it highlights the importance of community-based interventions that prioritize social support and address the unique needs of older adults. Overall, this paper underscores the critical role that social support can play in mitigating domestic violence in old age marriages in Nigeria. It suggests that greater attention should be paid to developing and implementing interventions that promote social support and address the unique needs of older adults in the context of domestic violence.

Keywords: Social Support, Domestic Violence, Old-Age, Mitigate, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is a pervasive and insidious problem in many societies around the world, including Nigeria. Domestic violence is defined as the use of physical, sexual, emotional, or economic abuse to control, intimidate, or harm a partner or family member. Old-age marriages, which are marriages between individuals aged 60 years and above, are particularly vulnerable to domestic violence due to factors such as declining health, financial insecurity, and loneliness. In this article, we will explore the role of social support in mitigating domestic violence in old-age marriages in Nigeria.

According Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2022, nearly one-third of Nigerian women have reported experiencing physical violence by their intimate partners, while about 10% have reported experiencing sexual violence, highlighting the urgent need for effective measures to address this issue. However, these figures are likely to be underreported, as many women are afraid to speak out due to fear of stigma, shame, or further violence. Domestic violence has serious physical and psychological consequences for victims, including injuries, chronic pain, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Old-age marriages are particularly vulnerable to domestic violence due to a range of factors. Firstly, declining health and mobility can make older individuals more dependent on their partners for care and support, which can make them more vulnerable to abuse. Older individuals may also be more likely to have chronic health conditions that require long-term care, which can be emotionally and financially draining for their partners. Secondly, financial insecurity is another risk factor for domestic violence in old-age marriages. Many older individuals in Nigeria may not have adequate retirement savings or pension plans, which can make them financially dependent on their partners. This can create a power dynamic in the relationship, where the partner with greater financial resources may use their economic leverage to control or abuse their partner. Finally, loneliness and social isolation are also risk factors for domestic violence in old-age marriages. Older individuals may be more socially isolated than younger individuals, as their social networks may have shrunk over time due to retirement, death of friends and family, or other factors. This can make them more vulnerable to abuse, as they may have fewer people to turn to for help and support.

Social support can play a critical role in mitigating domestic violence in old-age marriages in Nigeria. Social support refers to the assistance and emotional comfort that individuals receive from their social networks, such as family members, friends, and community organizations. Social support can take many forms, including emotional support (such as listening and offering empathy), practical support (such as providing transportation or financial assistance), and informational support (such as providing advice or information). Social support can help to reduce the risk of domestic violence by providing older individuals with a sense of belonging, emotional support, and practical assistance.

Family members and friends can play a crucial role in providing social support to older individuals who may be experiencing domestic violence. They can provide emotional support by listening to the older person's concerns and offering empathy and validation. They can also provide practical support by helping the older person to access medical care, legal assistance, or financial resources. Additionally, family members and friends can provide informational support by educating the older person about their rights and options for seeking help. Community organizations can also play an important role in providing social support to older individuals who may be experiencing domestic violence. These organizations can provide a range of services, including counseling, legal assistance, and financial support. They can also provide education and awareness-raising campaigns to help older individuals understand their rights and options for seeking help. Some community organizations may also provide temporary shelter or safe houses for older individuals who need to escape abusive situations.

In addition to providing social support, community organizations can also play a role in prevention efforts by raising awareness about domestic violence and promoting healthy relationships. They can provide education and training to older individuals and their families about the warning signs of domestic violence and how to seek help if needed. Community organizations can also work with local authorities and law enforcement to ensure that domestic violence cases are taken seriously and that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions. It is important to note that social support alone may not be enough to completely eliminate domestic violence in old-age marriages. There are many complex factors that contribute to domestic violence, including cultural norms, gender inequality, and economic factors. However, social support can help to reduce the risk of domestic violence and provide older individuals with the resources they need to seek help if they are experiencing abuse.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ITS PREVALENCE IN NIGERIA

Domestic violence is a grave societal issue that impacts millions of individuals worldwide. It constitutes a form of gender-based violence that encompasses physical, sexual, emotional, or economic abuse by one partner towards another in an intimate relationship. In Nigeria, domestic violence is a persistent problem

that affects women, men, and children. This article aims to present a thorough literature review of domestic violence in Nigeria, covering its prevalence, underlying causes, and consequences.

Various studies have reported different estimates of the prevalence of domestic violence in Nigeria. According to a 2019 study by the National Population Commission (NPC) and the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), which referenced the 2018 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), approximately 30% of women between the ages of 15 to 49 have experienced physical violence, and 7% have experienced sexual violence, from their intimate partners. The study also revealed that 22% of women between the ages of 15 to 49 have experienced physical violence from a family member or acquaintance who is their intimate partner. Another study conducted by the Women's Health and Action Research Centre (WHARC) in 2019 found that 28.3% of women in Lagos State have experienced physical violence, while 21.6% have experienced sexual violence, from their intimate partners.

The causes of domestic violence in Nigeria are intricate and diverse. Scholars have identified numerous factors that contribute to the prevalence of domestic violence in the country, including gender inequality, poverty, cultural norms, and alcohol and drug abuse. According to a 2018 study by Oyewole et al., gender inequality, particularly the belief in male superiority and the acceptance of violence against women, is a crucial predictor of domestic violence in Nigeria. Similarly, a 2019 study by Kazeem et al. found that poverty and economic stress are also significant predictors of domestic violence in Nigeria. The study revealed that men who experience economic stress are more likely to engage in more violence.

The consequences of domestic violence in Nigeria are severe and long-lasting. Domestic violence can result in physical injuries, psychological trauma, and even death. Women who experience domestic violence are at greater risk of developing depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other mental health problems. Children who witness domestic violence are also at risk of developing mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression, and are more likely to engage in violent behavior in their adult lives. A study by Oyewole, et al., (2020) found that domestic violence is a significant predictor of poor mental health outcomes among women in Nigeria.

Several interventions have been proposed to address the problem of domestic violence in Nigeria. These interventions include legal reforms, education and awareness campaigns, and economic empowerment programs for women, and counseling and support services for victims of domestic violence. However, the effectiveness of these interventions in reducing the prevalence of domestic violence in Nigeria need to be strengthened for optimal results. More research is needed to evaluate other areas to effectively address other interventions and to identify new approaches to address this pervasive social problem.

In conclusion, domestic violence is a serious social problem that affects millions of people in Nigeria. Its prevalence is high, and its causes are complex and multifaceted. Gender inequality, poverty, cultural norms, and alcohol and drug abuse are some of the factors that contribute to the prevalence of domestic violence in Nigeria. The consequences of domestic violence are severe and long-lasting, and interventions are needed to address this problem. Legal reforms, education and awareness campaigns, economic empowerment programs for women, and counseling and support services for victims of domestic violence are

RISK FACTORS FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN OLD-AGE MARRIAGES IN NIGERIA

Domestic violence is a pervasive issue in Nigeria, affecting individuals of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds. However, recent studies have shown that domestic violence in old-age marriages is on the rise, and there are several risk factors that contribute to this phenomenon. In this essay, we will examine

these risk factors and discuss the scholarly literature on the subject.

One of the primary risk factors for domestic violence in old-age marriages is the presence of chronic illness or disability. According to a study conducted by Owoaje et al. (2016), chronic illness and disability are significant predictors of domestic violence in older couples. This is likely due to the added stress and burden that these conditions place on the couple, as well as the potential for decreased mobility and independence. Additionally, the study found that women with chronic illness or disability were more likely to experience domestic violence than men with the same conditions.

Another risk factor for domestic violence in old-age marriages is financial dependence. A study by Fawole et al. (2018) found that financial dependence was a significant predictor of domestic violence among older couples. This is particularly relevant in Nigeria, where traditional gender roles often dictate that men are the primary breadwinners and women are responsible for domestic duties. This dynamic can create a power imbalance in the relationship, with the financially dependent partner being more vulnerable to abuse.

A third risk factor for domestic violence in old-age marriages is marital dissatisfaction. According to a study by Oyegbile et al. (2019), older couples who reported lower levels of marital satisfaction were more likely to experience domestic violence. This may be due to a variety of factors, including unresolved conflicts, communication breakdowns, and feelings of resentment or dissatisfaction with the relationship.

Finally, cultural and societal factors can also contribute to domestic violence in old-age marriages. A study by Adebayo and Adejumo (2017) found that traditional gender roles and cultural beliefs about marriage and family can perpetuate domestic violence in older couples. For example, the belief that women should be submissive to their husbands and prioritize their husband's needs over their own can create an environment where abuse is more likely to occur.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL SUPPORT AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN OLD AGE MARRIAGE

One prominent theoretical framework that can be used to understand the relationship between social support and domestic violence in old age marriage in Nigeria is the Social Exchange Theory. This theory posits that social relationships are based on the exchange of benefits and costs between individuals, and that individuals will continue to engage in relationships as long as the benefits outweigh the costs. In the context of domestic violence, social support can be seen as a benefit that can reduce the costs of leaving an abusive relationship.

According to Akinyemi and colleagues (2020), social support can be categorized into emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support. Emotional support refers to expressions of empathy, love, and care, while instrumental support involves tangible assistance such as financial resources or shelter. Informational support can be accessed through advice or guidance, while appraisal support serves to boost one's self-esteem and confidence.

A study by Afolabi and colleagues (2019) found that emotional support from family members was associated with reduced likelihood of experiencing domestic violence among older married individuals in Nigeria. Similarly, instrumental support in the form of financial assistance was found to be a protective factor against domestic violence in old age marriage in a study by Owoaje and colleagues (2017).

In addition to the Social Exchange Theory, the Ecological Systems Theory can also be used to understand the relationship between social support and domestic violence in old age marriage. This theory emphasizes the role of multiple systems, including the individual, the family, the community, and the broader societal

context, in shaping behavior and outcomes. In the context of domestic violence, social support can be seen as a protective factor that operates at multiple levels to prevent or address abuse.

For example, at the individual level, social support can enhance coping resources and self-efficacy, while at the family level, social support can provide an alternative source of care and protection. At the community level, social support can facilitate access to resources such as legal aid and counseling, while at the societal level, social support can promote policies and programs that address the root causes of domestic violence.

The Social Exchange Theory and Ecological Systems Theory can provide useful frameworks for understanding the relationship between social support and domestic violence in old age marriage in Nigeria. Studies by Afolabi et al. (2019) and Owoaje et al. (2017) have highlighted the importance of different types of social support in preventing or addressing domestic violence among older adults. It is important for policymakers and practitioners to take these theoretical insights into account when developing interventions and policies to address domestic violence in the Nigerian context.

APPLICATION OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TO OLD AGE MARRIAGE IN NIGERIA

The Social Exchange Theory and Ecological Systems Theory can be applied to the understanding of the dynamics of social support and domestic violence in old age marriage in Nigeria. Using the Social Exchange Theory, the provision of social support by family members, friends, and other sources can be seen as a benefit that can reduce the costs of leaving an abusive relationship for older individuals. The theory posits that individuals will continue to engage in relationships as long as the benefits outweigh the costs. Thus, in the context of domestic violence, social support can be seen as a benefit that can reduce the costs of leaving an abusive relationship. For example, emotional support from family members can provide older adults with the necessary resources to cope with the emotional trauma associated with domestic violence. Similarly, instrumental support, such as financial assistance, can provide older adults with the necessary resources to leave an abusive relationship.

The Ecological Systems Theory can also be applied to the understanding of the dynamics of social support and domestic violence in old age marriage in Nigeria. The theory posits that multiple systems, including the individual, the family, the community, and the broader societal context, can influence behavior and outcomes. In the context of domestic violence, social support can be seen as a protective factor that operates at multiple levels to prevent or address abuse.

At the individual level, social support can enhance coping resources and self-efficacy, allowing older individuals to leave an abusive relationship or seek help. At the family level, social support can provide an alternative source of care and protection, reducing the risk of domestic violence. At the community level, social support can facilitate access to resources such as legal aid and counseling, while at the societal level, social support can promote policies and programs that address the root causes of domestic violence.

The application of the Social Exchange Theory and Ecological Systems Theory can provide useful frameworks for understanding the dynamics of social support and domestic violence in old age marriage in Nigeria. It is important for policymakers and practitioners to take these theoretical insights into account when developing interventions and policies to address domestic violence in the Nigerian context.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT IN MITIGATING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN OLD-AGE MARRIAGES

Domestic violence is a pervasive problem in societies around the world, affecting people of all ages,

genders, and social backgrounds. However, older adults are a particularly vulnerable population when it comes to domestic violence, as they may face unique challenges such as decreased physical and mental health, social isolation, and financial dependence. In this context, social support can play a critical role in mitigating the impact of domestic violence and promoting the well-being of older adults.

Numerous studies have examined the relationship between social support and domestic violence in old-age marriages. One such study, conducted by Kim and colleagues (2011), found that social support from family members and friends was negatively associated with domestic violence among older adults in Korea. The study found that social support reduced the likelihood of both physical and psychological violence, and that this relationship was particularly strong for women.

Similarly, a study by Wathen and colleagues (2009) examined the role of social support in reducing the risk of domestic violence among older women in Canada. The study found that women who had more social support from friends and family members were less likely to experience domestic violence. The researchers suggested that social support may help to reduce the isolation that older women may feel, and may provide them with the resources and encouragement needed to leave abusive relationships.

Other studies have focused specifically on the role of social support in helping older adults cope with the after-effects of domestic violence. For example, a study by Meeks and colleagues (2015) examined the relationship between social support and mental health outcomes among older women who had experienced domestic violence. The study found that higher levels of social support were associated with better mental health outcomes, including lower levels of depression and anxiety.

In addition to these quantitative studies, there have also been qualitative studies that have explored the experiences of older adults who have experienced domestic violence and the role that social support has played in their lives. For example, a study by Sormanti and Shibusawa (2008) interviewed older women who had experienced domestic violence, and found that social support from family members and friends was critical in helping them to cope with the trauma of abuse. The women reported that social support provided them with emotional support, practical assistance (such as help with housing and finances), and a sense of validation for their experiences.

Another study conducted by Kim and colleagues (2015) examined the role of social support in the relationship between domestic violence and depression among older adults in Korea. The study found that social support moderated the relationship between domestic violence and depression, suggesting that social support may buffer the negative effects of abuse on mental health.

Similarly, a study by Mouton and colleagues (2017) explored the relationship between social support and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among older adults who had experienced domestic violence. The study found that social support was negatively associated with PTSD symptoms, and that this relationship was particularly strong for women.

These studies highlight the importance of social support in mitigating the impact of domestic violence among older adults. Social support can provide survivors with the resources and emotional support they need to cope with abuse, and may also help to reduce the risk of abuse in the first place. However, it is important to note that social support is not a panacea for domestic violence, and additional interventions may be necessary to effectively address this complex and multifaceted problem.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, social support can play a significant role in mitigating domestic violence in old-age marriages in Nigeria. Such support can come from a variety of sources, including family members, friends, community

leaders, and government agencies. By providing emotional, financial, and legal support to victims of domestic violence, social support can help reduce the incidence and severity of abuse and improve the well-being of older adults. Therefore, it is essential to continue to raise awareness about the importance of social support in preventing and addressing domestic violence in old-age marriages and to advocate for policies and programs that support victims and promote healthy relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research on the role of social support in mitigating domestic violence in old-age marriages in Nigeria, the following recommendations can be made:

1. There is a need to increase awareness about the importance of social support in mitigating domestic violence in old-age marriages in Nigeria. This can be done through public campaigns, educational programs, and community outreach initiatives. Such efforts can help reduce the stigma associated with reporting domestic violence and encourage victims to seek help.
2. Community-based support networks should be developed to provide emotional, financial, and legal support to victims of domestic violence. These networks can include family members, friends, community leaders, and government agencies. Such support can help victims to cope with the trauma of domestic violence, access resources, and develop a safety plan.
3. Healthcare professionals should be trained to recognize the signs of domestic violence in older adults and provide appropriate support and referrals. They should also be trained to provide trauma-informed care and work collaboratively with other professionals to address the complex needs of older victims of domestic violence.
4. The legal framework for addressing domestic violence in Nigeria needs to be strengthened and to adequately protect the rights of older adults and provide legal sanctions for perpetrators of domestic violence. In addition, there is a need for increased funding for legal aid services to ensure that victims have access to justice.
5. There is a need for collaboration between different sectors, including healthcare, social services, law enforcement, and the judiciary, to address the issue of domestic violence in old-age marriages in Nigeria. Such collaboration can help to ensure that victims receive the support they need and that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions.
6. In Nigeria, religion plays a significant role in people's lives, and religious leaders are often highly respected and influential figures in communities. By involving religious leaders in efforts to address domestic violence in old-age marriages, we can tap into their influence and help to promote positive attitudes towards older adults and the importance of providing social support to victims of abuse. Religious leaders can also help to promote messages of respect, compassion, and forgiveness, which can be important in addressing issues of domestic violence.
7. In many Nigerian communities, there is a tendency to view older adults as being more traditional and conservative in their views. This can sometimes lead to a lack of understanding and empathy towards older adults who are experiencing abuse. By promoting intergenerational dialogue, we can help to bridge the gap between older and younger generations and promote greater understanding and empathy towards older adults. This can help to break down the cultural barriers that can sometimes prevent victims of domestic violence from seeking help.

In conclusion, mitigating domestic violence in old-age marriages in Nigeria requires a multi-faceted approach that involves increasing awareness, developing support networks, training healthcare professionals, strengthening legal frameworks, and enhancing cross-sectoral collaboration. These recommendations can help to reduce the incidence and severity of domestic violence and improve the well-being of older adults in Nigeria.

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