
Domestic Violence against Women in Rivers State: Implications for Counseling

*Ukoima, Ruth Nkalo, Dimkpa, Chioma Ann & Mina, Agnes Dick
Department of Educational Foundation, Faculty of Education, Rivers State University, Port
Harcourt

*Corresponding Author's Email: ukoimaruth@gmail.com

Abstract: *The study examined domestic violence against women in River State: Implications for counseling. The areas or types of domestic violence were discussed extensively. The causes, effects of domestic violence were numerated by the researchers. Based on the study the researchers recommended, premarital counseling as this will help intending couples on how to manage their relationship. Counseling implication should be that the Government should fund counseling centers in all the Local Government Area and employ professional counselors to help victims and perpetrators of domestic violence.*

Keywords: *Domestic violence, Women, Counselling and Abuse*

INTRODUCTION

In Rivers State we hear of domestic violence on a daily basis, if the news is not about the growing trend of “baby making factories” dotting the nooks and crannies of the state, it may be about husband killing the wife or wife killing the husband. Sometimes, it may be about a father violating his daughter by sexually abusing her. The River state women are beaten, raped and even murdered by member of their town, families which can range from not having meals, reading on time to doing things without their husband permission. Some women even experience acid attacks from their husbands which cause extreme pain, disfigurement, sometimes, lead to the death of the victims. Domestic violence affects all social groups in the society and can consist of physical, sexual, emotional, economical and psychological abuse [American psychiatric association, 2005; Oifig and Tanaiste, 1997]. Although men can be abused or can be victims of domestic violence, women and children suffer it most (Denis, 2004). The culture of silence and stigmatization of victims of domestic violence hinders public acknowledgment of the problem. There is the need to challenge the institutional structures of the Nigerian society in order to protect women not just from danger, but also from ridicule, fear and isolation. The Rivers State Government as well as the Christian bodies should rise to the occasion and find ways to tackle the menace of domestic violence. The Nigerian police have been reluctant to intervene in incidents involving domestic violence, they regard domestic violence as a family or private affair. It is considered as “normal way of life” and even a “sign of love” (Nwankwo, 2003).

Women continue to suffer in silence and even accept domestic violence in their marriages as part of their destiny (Curran and Bonthuys, 2004).

Meaning of Domestic Violence

This is the intentional and persistent abuse of any one in the home in a way that causes pain, distress or injury. It is a common occurrence throughout River State and Nigeria at large. It involves disrespect and powerlessness that runs through women's lives. It is a violation of human rights (Nwokwo, 2003). It refers to any abusive treatment of one's family member by another thus violating the law of basic human rights. It includes battering of intimate partners and others, sexual abuse of children, marital rape and traditional practices that are harmful to women (Ahile, 2009). Domestic violence is usually a deliberate action and not a mistake. According to Scott and Marshall (2009), domestic violence is specifically male violence [physical or psychological] against women.

The term is believed to have been popularized by feminist in the 1970's. Some of whom established refugees to battered women. They argued that domestic violence is a reflection of gender inequalities in power and of women's oppression. More broadly, the term encompasses any violence within the family, although violence against children is usually described specially as child abuse. Researchers estimate that one out of every three girl child and one out of seven boy child will be sexually abuse by the time they are eighteen years (Roehlkepartain, 1988).

Harrison (2014) and Oye Lade (2012), however, see domestic violence as a physical, sexual, emotional, economic, psychological action or threat that influences another person. It includes any behavior that isolates, frightens, terrorizes, coerces, threatens, hits, injures or wounds or even controls another person negatively. From the various definitions one thing that is common is the fact that domestic violence has negative effects on the parties involved in the violence.

Theoretical Frame Work

Erik Erikson's view on human psychological Development was propounded in 1950. He stated that each psychosocial stage of development places certain demands which individuals must overcome before transiting to the next stage. Each stage of Erik Erikson's theory is concerned with becoming competent in an area of life. If any stage is managed poorly, the person will emerge with a ***development. According to Erikson, all the stages are present at birth, but only begin to unfold with one's ecology and cultural upbringing. In each stage a person confronts and hopefully masters new challenges. Each stage builds upon the successful completion of earlier stages. The challenges of any stage not successfully completed may be expected to return as problem in the future.

The stages are as follows:

Trust Verses Mistrust (0-2 Years)

The first stage of Erikson's theory centers around the infant's basic needs being met by the parents and this interaction leads to trust or mistrust. Trust as defined by Erikson is "an essential trustfulness of others as well as a fundamental sense of one's own trustworthiness", the infant depends on the mother especially for sustenance and comfort. The child's understanding of the world and society come from the parents and their interaction with the child. Development of mistrust can lead to feelings of frustration, suspicion, withdrawal, and a lack of confidence.

Autonomy Verses Shame/Doubt (2-4 Years)

As the child gains control over eliminative functions and motor abilities, they begin to explore their surroundings, parent still provide security from which the child can assert their will. The parents' patience and encouragement helps foster autonomy in the child. Children at this age like to explore the around them and they are constantly learning about their environment. Caution must be at this age while children may explore things that are dangerous to their health and safety. At this stage children develop their first interest, for example, a child who enjoys music may like to play with radio. Highly restrictive parents however, are more likely to instill in the child a sense of doubt and reluctance to attempt new challenges. As they gain increased muscular coordination and mobility, toddlers become capable of satisfying some of their own needs, they begin to feed themselves, wash and dress themselves. If parents or care givers encourage self-sufficient behavior, toddlers develop a sense of autonomy but if parents refuse to let children perform tasks of which they are capable or ridicule early attempts at self-sufficiency, children may instead develop shame and doubt about their ability to handle problems.

Initiative Verses Guilt (4-5 Years)

This is the third stage of Erik Erikson theory of psychosocial development. During this stage children assert themselves more frequently. These are particularly lively, rapid developing years in a child's life. During this stage the child regularly interact with other children especially in school. This is the stage of play, as play affords the children the opportunity to explore their inter-person skills through initiating activities. If initiation is dismissed or discouraged either through criticism or control, children develop a sense of guilt.

Industry Verses Inferiority

This stage occurs during childhood age of (5-12). At this stage, the child's peer group will gain greater significance and will become the child's major source of self-esteem. The child is now coping with new learning and social demands. Success leads to a sense of competence, while failure results in feelings of inferiority.

Identity Verses Role Confusion

This is the fifth stage, it occurs during adolescence, from about (12-18 years). They seek to explore who they are as individuals and to establish a sense of self and may experiment with different roles, activities and behavior. According to Erikson, this is important to the process of forming identity and developing a sense of direction in life.

Intimacy Verses Isolation

This stage takes place during young adulthood between the age of approximately 19 and 20. During this period, the major conflict centers on forming intimate, loving relationship with other people. Success leads to strong relationship while failure leads to loneliness and isolation.

Generativity Verses Stagnation

This stage takes place during middle adulthood between the ages of 40 and 65. People experience a need to create or nurture things that will outlast them, often having mentees or creating positive changes that will benefit other people. Success leads to feelings of usefulness and accomplishment, while failure results in shallow involvement in the world.

Ego Integrity Verses Despair

This stage takes place after the age of 65 and it involves reflecting on one's life and either

moving into feeling satisfied and happy with one's life or feeling a deep sense of regret. Success of this stage leads to feeling of wisdom while failure results in regret, bitterness and despair.

Bandura Social Learning Theory

Social learning Theory was theorized by Albert Bandura, he posits that people learn from one another via observation, imitation and modeling. The theory is often been called a bridge between behaviorist and cognitive learning theories because it encompasses attention, memory and motivation. People learn through observing the behavior of others, attitudes and outcomes of those behaviors. Most human behavior is learnt observationally through modeling. From observing others, ideas are formed of how new behaviors are performed and on later occasion this coded information serves as a guide to action of those behavior. Bandura's social learning theory explains human behavior in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive behavioral and environmental influences. Social learning theory has sometimes been called a bridge between behaviorist and cognitive learning theory because it encompasses attention, memory and motivation.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Concept of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence also known as (domestic abuse or family violence) is violence or other abuse by one person against another in a domestic setting such as in marriage or cohabitation. It may be termed intimate partner violence when committed by a spouse or partner in an intimate relationship against the other spouse or partner. Domestic violence can involve violence against children, parents or the elderly and can be done for self defense. It takes a number of forms including, physical, verbal, emotional, economics, religious, reproductive and sexual abuse which can range from subtle, coercive forms to marital rape and to violent physical abuse such as choking, beating, female genital mutilation and throwing acid that results to disfigurement or death.

Concept of Woman

The word woman is usually reserved for an adult, with girl being the usual term for a female child or adolescent. The plural of woman is also sometimes used for female humans regardless of age as is phrases such as human rights. A woman is an adult female who plays a significant role (wife, mistress or girl-friend) in the life of a particular man.

Types of Domestic Violence

The following are the different types of abuse a woman may be subjected to in the home:

Physical Abuse: This is the use of physical force in a way that injures the victim. It includes beating, kicking, knocking, punching, choking and confinement. It is one of the commonest forms of abuse.

Sexual Abuse: This includes all forms of sexual assault, harassment or exploitation. It involves forcing a person to participate in sexual activity, using a child for sexual purposes which include child prostitution and pornography, also marital rape is part of this.

Neglect: This includes failure to provide for dependents, they may be adults or children, denying family members food, clothing, shelter, protection from harm or a sense of being loved and valued.

Economic Abuse: This include stealing from a loved one, withholding money for essential things like food and medical treatment, preventing a loved one from working or controlling a spouse's choice of occupation.

Spiritual Abuse: This includes preventing a person from engaging in his/her spiritual or religious practices or using one's religion to manipulate or control others.

Emotional Abuse: This includes threatening a person to have his or her possession or harming a person's sense of self-worth by putting him/her at risk of serious behavioral, cognitive, emotional or mental disorder, shouting at a partner, name calling, criticism, social isolation, intimidating routinely making unreasonable demands etc.

Causes of Domestic Violence

The causes of domestic violence can be classified under the following:

Psychology: Sudden outbursts of anger, poor impulse control and poor self-esteem are personality traits that can affect the mental characteristics of offenders. Various theories suggest that psychopathology and other personality disorders are factors that abusers observed or experienced as a child causing some people to become more violent in adulthood (Kalra, 1996).

Jealousy: Many causes of violence against woman occur due to jealousy when the spouse is either suspected to be unfaithful or planning to leave the relationship.

Social Stress: Stress may increase when a person is living in a family situation, with increased pressures. Violence is not mostly caused by social stress, couple in poverty may be more likely to experience domestic violence due to increased stress and conflicts about finances and other aspects (Jewkes, 2002).

Social Learning: If one observes violent behavior, one is more likely to imitate it. Often, violence is transmitted from generation to generation in cyclical manner (Crowell and Sugarman, 1996).

Power and Control: Abuser abuse in order to establish and maintain control over the partner. Abusers' efforts to domestic have been attributed to low self esteem or feeling of inadequacy, unresolved childhood conflicts, the stress of poverty, hostility and resentment toward women, personality disorder, socio-cultural influence (Wikipedia, 2012). Most authorities seem to agree that abusive personalities result from combination of several factors to varying degrees.

Effects of Domestic Violence against Women

Effect on Children: There have been an increase in acknowledgement that a child who is exposed to domestic abuse during his upbringing will suffer in his development and psychological welfare (Dodd, 2009). Some emotional and behavioral problems that can result due to domestic violence includes aggressiveness, anxiety, and changes in how a child socializes with friends, family and authorities. Problems with attitude and cognition in schools can start developing, as a result of this. A relationship has been found between the experience of abuse and neglect in childhood and perpetrating domestic violence and sexual abuse in adulthood (Sadeler, 1994). Additionally, in some cases, the abuser will purposely abuse the mother in front of the child to cause a ripple effect, hurting two victims simultaneously, it has been found that children who witness mother assault are more likely to exhibit symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Lehumann, 1995).

Physical Effect: Bruises, broken bones, head injuries and internal bleeding are some of the acute effects of a domestic violence incident that require medical attention and hospitalization (Jones, 1997).

Psychological Effect: Victim still living with perpetrators exhibit high amount of stress, fear and anxiety are commonly reported. Depression is also common, as victims are made to feel guilty for provoking the abuse and are frequently subjected to intense criticism. The most commonly referenced psychological effect of domestic violence is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PSTD).

Financial Effect: Due to economic abuse and isolation, the victims usually have very little money of their own and few people on whom they can rely on when seeking financial help. This has been one of the greatest fact that can discourage them from leaving their perpetrators of domestic violence of lack specialized skills, education, and training that are necessary to find gainful employment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Comprehensive and extensive premarital counseling should be given to intending couples on how to manage their marital relationship.
2. There should be public enlightenment through the mass media on the negative effect of domestic violence against women, especially wife battery.
3. Religious Leaders should vigorously teach against marital violence in place of worship. Youths should be encouraged and taught to detest and not imitate brutish treatment of wives around them.
4. Medical Professionals after physical treatment of abused women should refer victims to counselors and psychotherapists. Punishment giving to grievous offenders should be publicized, so that it can serve as deterrence to others.
5. Young couple planning to get married should be guided on the ways to avoid violence in intimate relationship of marriage.
6. The government should establish and fund counseling centers at the community, and Local Government level and employ professional counselors to help victims and perpetrators of domestic violence.

COUNSELLING IMPLICATIONS

1. To remedy the domestic violence situation in Nigeria, all stakeholders must be involved including the communities, religious groups, institutions, government at all levels.
2. Seminars and workshops, where trained counselors would assist in propagating the anti-domestic violence campaign, should be organized. There is need to create awareness at this forums to underscore that fact that violence in the home serves as a breeding ground for violence in the society.
3. People should be made to understand that adults can change the social norms that justify domestic violence by being role models and working together to end violence in the home: Modeling non-violent relationships and disseminating information which condemns domestic violence.
4. In schools during Parents Teachers Association meetings, the school counselor could give enlightenment talks, encouraging parents to use disciplinary measures which are non-violence on their children or domestic violence of any form.
5. Prize giving day programmers could include short talks on the issue of domestic violence, emphasizing its evil consequence and the need for families to avoid it for better a society.
6. The school counselor could organize group counseling sessions for different age groups and classes, on the advantage of a violence free society. The boys in particular should be counseled on how to grow up into being healthy men. The children should be taught how to be assertive without being aggressive. They should be taught how to express anger and

frustration without violence. In counseling individual students with anger problem, the various anger management techniques should be taught.

REFERENCES

- Agbo, C. & Choji, R. (2014, June 24). *Domestic violence against women: Any end in sight?* <https://leadership/news/382501>.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. General Learning Press.
- Erikson, E.K. (1959). *Identify and the life cycle*. International University Press.
- Joues, R.H. (1997). The American college of obstetricians and gynecologists. A decade of to violence against women. *Internal Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics*, 58(1), 45-50.
- Kalra, M. (1996). *Juvenile delinquency and adult aggression against women*. (Unpublished M.A Thesis). Wilfred Laurier University.
- Lehamann, P.J. (1995). *Children who witness mother-assault: An expander posttraumatic stress disorder conceptualization*. (Unpublished M.A Thesis.) Wilfred Laurier University.
- National Network to End Domestic Violence (2011). *Crimes offended against children*. (Unpublished M.A. Thesis).
- Office of Violence against Women (2007, June 13). *About domestic violence*. <https://www.lsdoj.gov/ovw/domviolence>.
- Sadeler, C. (1994). *An ounce of prevention, the life stories and perceptions of men who sexually offended against children* (unpublished M.A Thesis). Wilfred Laurier University.
- Stress disorder in abused in Obi, S.N. & B.C. Ozumba (2007). Factors associated with domestic violence in South-East Nigeria. *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*. 27(3), 75-78.
- This Day (2011, September 20). *Domestic Violence: When law fails to protect*. <http://www.thisdaylive.com>.
- Wikipedia (2012, July 19). *Domestic violence*. [http://en.Wikipedia.org/wik/domestic violence](http://en.Wikipedia.org/wik/domestic%20violence).
- Wikipedia (1974, August 17). *A Psychiatric study of parents who abuse infants and small children in C.H, Wilfrid Laurier University*. <http://scholars.Wlu.ca/etd/634>.