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Factors Influencing Domestic Violence in Rural Communities of Abia State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
The study analysed factors influencing domestic violence in rural communities of Abia State. A multi stage sampling procedure was employed to select a sample size of 216 respondents. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Results from the study showed that male and female respondents had mean age of 40.6 and 31.3 years respectively. The study area was dominated by Christians. The respondents believed that partner being an alcoholic, partner being brought up in a home with domestic violence history and partner doing a low paying job contributed to domestic violence. These had the mean scores of (x =2.87), (x =2.71) and (x =2.84) respectively for the male respondents. While for the female respondents, the mean scores were (x= 3.19), (x = 2.90) and (x = 3.96) respectively. They also agreed that domestic violence led to depression, miscarriages during pregnancy or even death which had the mean scores of (x=2.81), (x=2.81) and (x =3.43) respectively for the male respondents and (x =3.31), (x =3.62) and (x =3.46) for the female respondents respectively. There was a significant difference between the socio-economic effect of domestic violence on male and female respondents in the study area. Partner being an alcoholic, refraining from speaking up incidences of domestic violence, and being previously involved in domestic violence were contributive factors to domestic violence in the home. The paper recommended that couples and individuals should speak up about abuses from their spouses.
Keywords: Domestic violence, Influencing, Rural Communities, Socio-cultural

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is a global phenomenon without national, economic, religious, geographical or cultural boarders. Violence is mostly performed in the direct social environment of the victim, thus affecting the physical and mental health of the individual involved (Chitashvili, Javakhshivili, Anituinov, Tsuladze and Chachanidize, 2010). Many households in Nigeria and beyond are plagued by domestic violence. This social epidemic has shattered the future of many homes, thus affecting everyone in the family. Domestic violence as a worldwide epidemic cuts across cultural, economic, and social groups. Every year, millions of women and girls worldwide suffer violence, be it domestic

violence, rape, female genital mutilation/cutting, dowry-related killing, trafficking, sexual violence in conflict-related situations, or other manifestations of abuse (Nwankwo, 2002).

Over time, different authors have their different definitions and explanations of this very term. Martz and Sarauer (2000) defined domestic violence as violence against women and children by intimate partners and other family members. In their study, domestic violence was used interchangeably with the term "spousal abuse". Elisberg and Heize (2005) **a**lso defined domestic violence as a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviour, including physical, sexual and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion used by adults or adolescents against their current or former intimate partner. In this study, domestic violence was referred to as "intimate partner violence". Here, the physical aspect of violence, which is the inflicting of injuries, and other aspects of violence, including sexual, psychological, and economic forms of domestic violence were recognized

Esere, Idowu, Durosaro and Omotosho (2009) averred that domestic violence as any act or mission committed within the framework of the family by one of its members, that undermines the life, the bodily or psychological integrity, or the liberty of another member of the same family; or that seriously harms the development of his or her personality. In this definition, domestic violence is pictured as an action that can come from either partner. This definition was not specific with the forms but tried to explain the different conditions that indicate that one is a victim.

Domestic violence violates the right of victims and limits their right of participation in the society, while damaging their health and wellbeing. Victims of domestic violence suffer a range of health problems and their ability to participate in public life is diminished. Domestic violence harms families and communities across generations and reinforces other violence prevalent in society. It also impoverishes victims, their families, communities and nations. However, if the situation is given due consideration, the quality of victim's life would be enhanced.

Every year, millions of people worldwide suffer from domestic violence. This is much more serious than an occasional argument that develops into an exchange of slaps. Many women live in fear of injury and death at home. Awake (2013) asserts that the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that about 35% of all women around the world experience either intimate partner or non-partner violence which is the most common type of violence presently affecting over 30 % of women worldwide. Cases of domestic violence against women have been on the increase in Nigeria. Abia State Ministry of Women Affairs handled over seventy cases of domestic violence between 2011 and 2014 (Ministry of Women Affairs, 2014). Nigeria is basically a patriarchal society where women's place within the scheme appears surbordinate. Domestic violence, therefore, functions as an indirect means of enforcing conformity with the role of women within customary society. (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, 2007).

The high rate of domestic violence in Nigeria, and the revelation of gross underreporting and non-documentation of domestic violence due to cultural factors necessitated the study.

Research Objectives

The broad objectives of the study were to: -

I. determine the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents
II. Identify perceived causes of domestic violence experienced or encountered by respondents in the study area.
III. Identify the socio-cultural factors promoting domestic violence in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Abia which is one of the 36 States of Nigeria. Multi-stage random sampling technique was employed to select the sample size. From each of the three zones in Abia State (Abia North, Abia Central and Abia South), three Local Government Areas were selected making it nine Local Government Areas. Two autonomous communities were then randomly

selected from each of the nine Local Government Areas making it 18 Autonomous communities. Then, two villages were randomly selected from each of the 18 Autonomous communities, thus making it 36 villages. Six households were purposively selected, compromising three males (husbands) and three females (wives). In all, 216 respondents constituted the sample size.
Questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. Descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the socio-economic characteristics. Socio-cultural and socio-economic factors promoting domestic violence was realized using a 4-point, Likert-type scale. This was ranked as follows: Strongly agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1.A mid-point of 2.50 was obtained. Any mean score greater than or equal to 2.50 implied that the respondents were in agreement but any mean score less than 2.50 implied non agreement.

The difference in the in responses to socio-cultural and economic effect of domestic violence between males and females in the study area was realized using Z- test

RESULTS AND DISCUSION

Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Respondents

Results presented in Table 1 showed the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. About half (52.7%) and 25% of the male and female respondents respectively, had partners who were 30 years and below. A quarter and 12% of the male and female respondents had no male child at all. About 37% and 45% of the male and female respondents living with their partners were not legally registered as married. Forty percent and 55.5% of the male and female respondents respectively had partners with complete secondary education, and about 22.2% and 13% of males and females respectively had partners who had completed their tertiary education. A majority of the male respondents had spouses who were members of social clubs, whereas 67.6% of the female respondents had spouses who were members of social clubs. Result showed that only 25.9% of the respondents of the female respondents' partner never made use of alcohol implying that most of the female respondents had partners who either drank alcohol sometimes or often.2.8% and 15.7% of male and female respondents had partners that always made use of hard drugs. Results from the study showed that 12% and 18.5% of the male and female respondents respectively married from a different cultural background other than their own.

Table 1 Distribution of respondents by their socio-economic characteristics

	Male respondents (108)		**Female respondents (108)**	
Age of spouse	**Frequency**	**Percentage**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
16-25	32	21.4	7	6.5
26-35	45	42.5	25	23.1
36-45	19	17.6	37	34.2
46-55	9	8.3	15	13.8
56-65	3	2.8	9	8.3
66-75	0	0	2	1.9
Mean age	**32.00**		**38.94**	
Number of male children				
None	13	12	29	26.9
One	28	25.6	39	36.1
Two	45	41.7	21	19.4
Three	14	13.0	10	9.3
Four	4	3.7	4	3.7
Five	4	3.7	5	4.6
Income(₦)				
10,000 and below	19	17.6	35	32.4
11,000 – 20,000	42	38.9	51	47.2
21,000 – 50,000	26	24.1	13	12.0
51,000 and above	21	19.4	9	8.3

Table 1 continued

Years spent in marriage				
1 – 5	42	38.9	56	51.9
6 – 10	42	38.9	27	25
11 – 15	15	13.8	10	9.3
16 – 20	6	5.5	8	7.4
21 – 25	1	0.9	1	0.9
26 – 30	1	0.9	3	2.7
31 – 35	1	0.9	3	2.7
Marriage Registration				
No registration	40	37.0	49	45.4
Local government	25	23.1	18	16.7
Church	39	36.1	33	30.6
Ministry of justice	4	3.7	8	7.4
Spouses' level of education				
No formal education	32	29.6	13	12.0
Primary education	9	8.3	21	19.4
Secondary education	43	39.9	60	55.5
Tertiary education	24	22.2	14	13
Social club membership				
No	28	25.9	35	32.4
Yes	80	74.1	73	67.6
Spouse use of alcohol				
Never	57	52.8	28	25.9
Sometimes	44	40.7	35	32.4
Always	7	6.5	45	41.7
Spouse use of hard drugs				
Never	103	95.4	83	76.9
Sometimes	2	1.9	8	7.4
Always	3	2.7	17	15.7
Cultural background				
Couple from the same cultural background	95	88.0	88	81.5
	13	12.0	20	18.5

Source: Field survey, 2015

Perceived causes of domestic violence by the respondents

Results from the Table 2 show that both the male and female respondents in the study area agreed that if one's partner is an alcoholic then there is a possibility of this causing domestic violence in the household. The response of both the male and female respondents on the statement "When the partner was young he lived in a home where his father hits his mother" thus showing that exposure of someone to domestic violence can predispose one to be being violent in his own home. This supports the social learning theory which posits that individuals become aggressive toward family members because their aggressive behaviour is learned through operant conditioning and observing the behaviour of their role models. (Malley-Morrison and Hines, 2004). Respondents also agreed that the partner working a low paying job could contribute to domestic violence in the home. This supports the Ecosystem Factor Theory which posits that stressors of life may contribute directly to violence (Domestic Violence). (Cano and Vivian, 2001) Both the male and female respondents agreed that if the partner is between 18 -30 years, it may contribute to domestic violence in the home. However, this supports the observations made by Hotaling and Sugarman (1990) and Oladepo *et al.* (2011). "Partner being an alcoholic" was one the factors which the respondents agreed as a possible cause of domestic violence in the household. Evidence suggests that alcohol abuse increases the occurrence and severity of domestic violence. (Leonard and Quigley, 1999; Testa, Quigley and Leonard, 2003; Brecklin, 2002). According to Room, Barbor and

Rehn (2000) alcohol abuse directly affects cognitive and physical function, thus reducing self-control and leaving individuals less capable of negotiating a non-violent resolution to conflicts within relationships. This could be the reason behind the agreement on the part of both the male and female respondents as to the contribution of alcohol abuse by ones partner to domestic violence.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by their response to perceived causes of domestic violence

Perceived Causes of Domestic Violence	**Male Mean (X)**	**Remarks**	**Female Mean (X)**	**Remarks**
Partner is an alcoholic	2.87	Agreed	3.19	Agreed
Partner has previously been involved in domestic violence	2.61	Agreed	2.66	Agreed
Partner is a drug addict	2.83	Agreed	3.18	Agreed
Partner lived in a home where his father hits his mother	2.71	Agreed	2.90	Agreed
Couple are not married; but cohabit	2.75	Agreed	3.06	Agreed
Partner is working a low paying job	2.84	Agreed	3.26	Agreed
Inferiority complex by the partner	2.71	Agreed	3.23	Agreed
Feelings of superiority by the male partner	2.56	Agreed	3.06	Agreed
Partner is a school dropout	2.44	Disagreed	2.91	Agreed
Income is below the poverty level	2.61	Agreed	3.38	Agreed
Partner is between 18 and 30 years	2.57	Agreed	3.50	Agreed
Couple from different cultural backgrounds	2.45	Disagreed	2.56	Agreed
Couple use violence towards their children	2.79	Agreed	3.12	Agreed
Grand mean	**2.67**		**3.08**	
Sum of mean	**34.74**		**39.98**	

Source: Field survey, 2015

Socio-Cultural Factors Influencing Domestic Violence

On social cultural factors influencing domestic violence, the male respondents agreed with 2 out of 13 social cultural factors as promoting domestic violence in the study area. They agreed that victims refraining from speaking about domestic abuse promote domestic violence. The respondents believed that if the victims speaking about their ordeal may reduce the rate at which they experience domestic violence in the home. They also agreed that friends and family members encouraging victims to endure domestic violence, may promote domestic violence. On the other hand, the female respondents agreed with 11 out of 13 statements as factors promoting domestic violence in the household. The respondents disagreed with the statements: "Societal norms promotes domestic violence", "Religious teaching promotes domestic violence" which they had mean scores of 2.36 and 2.01 respectively. This shows that the respondents never believed that social norms and religion promote domestic violence.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by their Response to socio-cultural factors Promoting Domestic Violence.

Socio-Cultural factors	Male mean ($\bar{X}$)	Remarks	Female mean ($\bar{X}$)	Remarks
Domineering attitude of men	2.07	Disagreed	3.04	Agreed
Inability to bear male child	2.36	Disagreed	3.35	Agreed
Lack of economic empowerment of women	2.05	Disagreed	2.79	Agreed
Societal norms promote domestic violence	1.51	Disagreed	2.36	Disagreed
Some cultural beliefs and values promote domestic violence	2.18	Disagreed	2.69	Agreed
Political marginalization of women	1.89	Disagreed	3.01	Agreed
The law in Nigeria reasonably allows husbands to chastise their wives	2.21	Disagreed	2.54	Agreed
Religious teaching promotes domestic violence	1.46	Disagreed	2.01	Disagreed
Friends and families are likely to encourage victims to endure victimization	2.56	Agreed	2.67	Agreed
Under reporting incidence of domestic violence	2.35	Disagreed	2.78	Agreed
Victims refraining from speaking about the abuse by their spouse.	2.50	Agreed	2.83	Agreed
Lack of support of victims by the government	2.00	Disagreed	2.32	Agreed
The identity of the victims may be so important for them to endure violence.	2.41	Disagreed	2.66	Agreed
Grand mean	**2.11**		**2.70**	
Sum of mean	**27.55**		**35.05**	

Source: Field survey, 2015

The result from the table also shows that both the male and female respondents believed that if friends encourage a victim to endure domestic violence it may promote it in the household, and also that if victims of domestic violence refrain from speaking up about the abuse from their spouses that it may promote it in their households.

Results on the Table 4 show respondents' perception on effects of domestic violence on the households. These male respondents disagreed with the statements: - "Because of economic abuse victims of domestic violence usually have little money of their own" and "Victims of domestic violence often lack specialized skills, education, and training that are necessary to enhance their livelihood and also may have several children to take care of" which they had the mean scores of 2.22 and 2.05 respectively. This indicates that the male respondents never believed that victims of domestic violence usually have little money of their own or are deprived of the resources of their own or that the victims of domestic violence often lack specialized skills, education, and training that are necessary to enhance their livelihood and also may have several children to take care of. Whereas the female respondents agreed with all the statements as the socio-economic effects of domestic violence in the household they had the grand mean of 3.24. They agreed with the statements: "Because of economic abuse victims of domestic violence usually have little money of their own" and "Victims of domestic violence often lack specialized skills, education, and training that are necessary to enhance their livelihood and also may have several children to take care of". Also, studies have shown that domestic violence can create serious obstacles that prevent victims from achieving economic security and self- sufficiency. However, by controlling and limiting the

victim's access to financial resources, the perpetrator ensures that the victim will be financially limited or choose the relationship. As a result, victims of domestic violence are often forced to choose between staying in abusive relationship or facing economic hardship and possibly extreme poverty and homelessness. This, however, was disagreed on by the male respondents, thus implying that the female respondents were mostly affected by those forms of domestic violence as has been proved by some researchers such as Ashimolowo and Otufale (2012) and Alokan (2013).

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents' perception on Socio-economic Effects of Domestic Violence

Effects of domestic violence	Male Mean (X)	Remarks	Female Mean (X)	Remarks
Causes low esteem	2.60	Agreed	3.41	Agreed
Children trained in violent homes would be violent also	3.09	Agreed	2.99	Agreed
Physical abuse can causes physical injuries	3.43	Agreed	3.46	Agreed
Pregnant women who are victims, have a greater risk of miscarriages, injuries or death of the foetus	2.81	Agreed	3.62	Agreed
Victims of suffer from depression	2.81	Agreed	3.31	Agreed
Victims of domestic violence suffer from long term anxiety	2.68	Agreed	2.85	Agreed
Because of economic abuse, victims usually have little money of their own	2.22	Disagreed	3.24	Agreed
Victims often lack specialized skills and training necessary to enhance their livelihood	2.05	Disagreed	2.94	Agreed
Major effects includes psychological/ mental health issues	2.73	Agreed	3,15	Agreed
Victims suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder	2.73	Agreed	3.43	Agreed
Poor participation in farming activities	3.10	Agreed	3,22	Agreed
Grand mean	**2.49**		**3.24**	
Sum of mean	**27.44**		**35.62**	

Source: Field survey, 2015

Table 4 shows that the respondents agreed on the statement that "pregnant women who are victims of domestic violence have a greater risk of miscarriages injury to or death of the fetus" thus indicating that if pregnant women are exposed to domestic violence it may be detrimental to both their health and the health of their unborn child. This is in line with studies carried out by Gyusie and Ushie (2009), Matseke, Peltzer and Mlambo (2012) and Alokan (2013). Both the male and female respondents agreed that domestic violence can lead to depression.

Test for differences in the social and economic effect of domestic violence between male and female respondents

Table 5 shows the result from the hypothesis which states that "there is no significant difference between the social and economic effect of domestic violence between the male and female respondents". Data from the result shows that there was a significant difference in the social and economic effect of domestic violence between male and female respondents in the study area. This was significant at 1% level. The estimate of difference is -0.4800. This, however, implies that the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the socio-economic effect of domestic violence between male and female respondents in the study area was rejected and the alternate accepted.

Table 5: Test for difference in the social and economic effect of domestic violence between male and female respondents in the study area

Variable	SE Mean	Mean (X)	Z value	Estimate of difference
Male Respondents	0.028	2.758		
Female Respondents	0.018	3.238	-14.45***	-0.4800

Source: Field Survey, 2015. *** is significant at 1% level. Decision rule: the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the socio-economic effect of domestic violence between male and female respondents in the study area is rejected and the alternate is accepted.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results from the study showed that partner being an alcoholic, partner growing up in a violent home and partner working on a low paying job are possible causes of domestic violence in the household. Domestic violence in the household can contribute to the risk of miscarriages, injury to or death of the fetus" among pregnant women. Thus, indicating that if pregnant women are exposed to domestic violence it may be detrimental to both their health and the health of their unborn child. Also, the result showed the potentials of domestic violence in limiting the involvement of victims in economic activities such agricultural activities in the rural areas.

Therefore, it was recommended that victims of domestic violence should always speak up about the domestic abuse from their spouses. Friends should not encourage victims to endure domestic violence. Also governmental authorities as well as Non-Governmental Organizations should create awareness on the effects of domestic violence on victims, especially pregnant women as these would help to reduce battering and as well as other form of domestic violence which would be detrimental to the health of the victims.

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