

SPOUSAL VIOLENCE AND ITS PERCEIVED INFLUENCE ON CHILDREN IN EBUTE METTA, LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated spousal violence and its perceived influence on children in Ebute Metta, Lagos Mainland, Lagos State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Population for the study was 326,700 households. Sample size for the study was 384 derived from the statistical table for determining sample size developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Validated questionnaire was used for data collection. Data obtained was analysed using mean and standard deviation. Findings indicated that the forms of spousal violence included physical violence and aggressiveness, sexual violence, emotional and psychological violence. Findings also showed that the causes of spousal violence could be attributable to individual, relationship and societal factors. The consequences of spousal violence on the victimized spouse could be physical, psychological and social. Findings also revealed that the perceived effects of spousal violence on children included among others nightmares, lethargy, frequent headaches, depression, aggressive behaviour, shame and guilt, fear of abandonment and short attention span in school. Among recommendations made was that spouses should seek effective mediation approaches towards resolving conflicts in marriages. Also, spouses should create a conducive and peaceful environment in their homes as children imitate what is seen in the home.

Keywords: *Spouse, Domestic, Violence, Children, Marriage*

INTRODUCTION

A spouse can be defined as a person in marriage or marital relationship. Stange, Carol, Oyster and Sloan, (2011) stated that a spouse is a life partner in marriage, civil union or common law marriage. The surest measures of a man and woman's maturity in marriage is the harmony, style, joy and dignity he/she creates in the marriage and the pleasure and inspiration he/she provides for his/her spouse. However, in recent times, there are reported cases of different patterns of violence from one or both spouses. Babu (2010) viewed violence as an extreme form of aggression, such as assault, rape or murder. Jacquin (2018) defined violence as an act of physical force that causes or is intending to cause harm. The damage inflicted by violence may be physical, psychological or both. She further said that violence is a general type of hostile

behaviour that may be physical, verbal or passive in nature. Spousal violence can take a number of forms, including physical, verbal, emotional, economical and sexual abuse (Connie, 2009). WHO (2010) viewed spousal violence as any behaviour within an inmate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviour. According to Watts (2014) violent behaviour is instigated by one reason or the other and this result in severe consequences if not curbed.

Violence can be categorized based on the nature of the behaviour such as homicide, assault, rape, child abuse and domestic violence (violent behaviour between relative usually spouses). Violence can also be categorized according to its motivation such as reactive violence or emotional violence which is typically the expression of anger, a hostile desire to hurt someone that arises in response to a perceived provocation (Crofford, 2007). Spousal violence exists in all countries with varying degree or prevalence. Solanke (2014) reported that in a review of 50 populated based studies conducted at various times in 36 countries, spousal violence was experienced by both men and women. Spousal violence is among most underreported crimes worldwide for both men and women (Halket, Megan, Gormeley & Melcow, 2013). Spousal violence is a global issue that has resulted in millions of death by spouses and needs immediate solution.

Spousal violence can occur in or outside the home. Victims of spousal violence who are mostly women are more likely to act violently in retaliation or self-defense and tend to engage in less forms of violence than men, whereas men are more likely to commit long term cycles of abuse than women (Connie, 2009). According to Harmmoury (2009) most victims of spousal violence are abused verbally and shouted down by their perpetrators. Advdibegovic (2010) reported that in African setting, spousal violence is a private family matter that needs not involve the government or criminal justice. In Nigeria non-reporting of spousal violence is enforced by male dominance patriarchal system of family setting, cultural norms, fear of stigmatization and religious beliefs (Ezechi et al., 2012).

Most women will resort to praying, crying and begging, as opposed to seeking help or leaving the violent partner, this is done to protect their marriage, to prevent their children from suffering from neglect and abuse and to maintain their source of income (Fawole, Aderonmu & Fawole 2005). The abuse is often intended to, and typically has the consequence of wearing down the others self-worth and self-respect. According to the Centre for Health Ethics Law and Development (2017), in many cases of reported spousal violence the abused is made to feel that he/she is responsible for the abuse. United Nations (2015) reported that 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical, emotional and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence. The World Health Organization (2017) in a multi country study indicated that worldwide spousal violence against women ranged from 51% in Japan to the highest level of 71% in Ethiopia. A study done in Eastern Nigeria showed that 92% of the victims of spousal violence were women while only 8% were men (Obi, 2007).

Many studies have found an association between spousal violence and negative social and health consequences for children, including anxiety, depression, poor school performance and negative health outcome. Fantuzzo and Mohr (2010) mentioned that children who are exposed to spousal violence experience physical effects such as nightmares, fatigue and lethargy. Kimball (2015) reported that children exposed to spousal violence have a feeling of shame, guilt and self-blame. They exhibit grief for family and personal losses. Helse and Garcia (2002) noted that children from homes where intimate partner violence is practiced exhibit fear of abandonment, of expressing emotions, fear of the unknown, and fear for personal injury. Such children show anger and the chaos in their lives exhibiting feelings of depression, helplessness and powerlessness. Such children are aggressive and their behaviour is usually out of control (Johnson, 2006). According to Kimball and Keene (2016), children who have witnessed spousal violence have been shown to have social effects such as isolation from friends and relatives or strong craving of adult approval. They have difficulty in trusting people and their play with peers gets exceedingly rough.

Experiences in early childhood have a major impact on physical, cognitive, emotional and social development throughout the life span of the child. During the early years, children learn from their immediate family and societal environment on how to interact with the world and how to relate with people (Farrington, 2006). The strength of the relationship between a child's exposure and risk of involvement in spousal violence later in life suggests that the prevention of child exposure and violence could be an important component of preventing spousal violence over the life course of the child. It is based on this background that the study was conducted to determine spousal violence and its influence on children in Lagos State.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the study was to examine spousal violence and its influence on children in Lagos State. Specifically, the study examined:

1. Forms of spousal violence in Lagos State,
2. Causes of spousal violence in Lagos State,
3. Consequences of spousal violence on the victimized partner and
4. Perceived effects of spousal violence on the children

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the forms of spousal violence in Lagos State?
2. What are the causes of spousal violence in Lagos State?
3. What are the consequences of spousal violence on the victimized partner?
4. What are the perceived effects of spousal violence on the children?

METHODOLOGY

Design of the study: The study adopted descriptive survey design.

Area of the study: The study was conducted in Lagos Mainland (Ebute Metta), Lagos State, Nigeria. Lagos State was chosen for the study because it is an urban city with several reported cases of spousal violence.

Population for the study: The population size for this study comprised of 326,700 households in Lagos Mainland (Ebute-Metta), Lagos State, Nigeria. (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

Sample and sampling techniques: Sample size for the study was 384. This was derived from the statistical table for determining sample size developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The authors suggested that for population above 100,000, sample size of 384 can be used. Sampling technique adopted for the study was systematic random sampling technique used to select the households used for the study. Hence; every 10th house in Ebute Metta was selected for questionnaire administration.

Instrument for data collection: The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was titled “Spousal Violence and its Perceived Effects on Children” (SVPEC). The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A sought for demographic information while section B was based on the research questions. Section B was drawn on a four point scale rating: SA as Strongly Agreed, A as Agreed, D as Disagreed and SD as Strongly Disagreed. Three Home Economics lecturers subjected the instrument to face and content validation. Cronbach Alpha method was used in determining the internal consistency of the instrument and it yielded reliability co-efficient index of 0.89.

Validation of the instrument: This was done by three Home Economics Experts in Yaba College of Technology, Yaba, Lagos State.

Reliability of the instrument: This was determined by test re-test method. The questionnaire was pretested to 10 couples in Lagos Island and again after two weeks. A reliability co-efficient of 0.97 was obtained using spearman’s correlation method.

Method of data collection: Four hundred copies of the questionnaire were distributed to respondents with the help of three research assistants. The research assistants were guided on how to distribute and retrieved the filled questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed within a span of three weeks. Efforts were made to ensure that the items were filled correctly without omitting any of the needed information. The questionnaires were retrieved immediately. Out of the 400 questionnaires distributed, 387 were returned showing 97% return rate.

Method of data analysis: Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation.

RESULTS:**Table I: Mean and Standard Deviation on Forms of Spousal Violence**

S/N	Forms of Spousal Violence	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Physical violence and aggressiveness such as:			
i.	Throwing objects	2.63	1.10	Agreed
ii.	Beating	3.52	0.69	Agreed
iii.	Scratching	2.53	1.04	Agreed
iv.	Slapping	3.10	0.57	Agreed
v.	Pushing	2.70	0.67	Agreed
vi.	Hair pulling	2.66	1.01	Agreed
vii.	Grabbing and pulling the penis	2.60	0.42	Agreed
viii.	kicking	3.25	0.77	Agreed
2.	Sexual Violence such as:			
i.	Rape	2.84	0.94	Agreed
ii.	Forcing a partner into sexual touching	1.91	1.02	Disagreed
iii.	Forcing partner to have sex with a stranger	2.00	1.02	Disagreed
iv.	Stalking	3.53	0.53	Agreed
3.	Emotional and Psychological Violence such as:			
i.	Curses	3.33	0.58	Agreed
ii.	Abuse	3.20	0.67	Agreed
iii.	Exerting control over the partner	3.12	0.92	Agreed

Key: X= Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

Table I indicated that there are several forms of spousal violence. Most of the mean responses ranged from 2.53 to 3.52 indicating that the items were agreed upon as forms of spousal violence. However, the respondents disagreed that forcing a partner into sexual touching (1.91) and forcing partner to have sex with a stranger (2.00) were forms of spousal violence. The standard deviation of the responses ranged from 0.59 to 1.10 implying that the mean values were not far from each other.

Table II: Mean and Standard Deviation on Causes of Spousal Violence in Lagos State

S/N	Causes of Spousal Violence	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Individual Factor such as:			
i.	Marrying at a young age	3.91	0.96	Agreed
ii.	Low level of education	3.70	0.88	Agreed
iii.	Alcohol use	3.01	1.00	Agreed
iv.	Drug use	3.12	0.92	Agreed
v.	Personality disorders	2.76	0.90	Agreed
vi.	Past history of abusing partners	2.85	1.06	Agreed
vii.	Experiencing violence as a child	3.66	0.59	Agreed

2. Relationship Factor such as:				
i. Male dominance in the family	2.72	0.80	Agreed	
ii. Disparity in spouses educational levels	3.74	1.02	Agreed	
iii. Dissatisfaction in the relationship	2.84	0.94	Agreed	
iv. Problem of anger management	3.96	0.99	Agreed	
v. Financial problems	3.66	0.95	Agreed	
3. Societal factors such as:				
i. Gender inequality / discrimination in the society	3.31	0.58	Agreed	
ii. Poverty	3.87	1.07	Agreed	
iii. Low economic status of partner	2.90	0.73	Agreed	
iv. Weak legal sanctions against spousal violence	2.95	1.08	Agreed	
v. Weak community sanctums against spousal violence	2.60	0.73	Agreed	
vi. Broad social acceptance of violence as a way to resolve conflict	3.10	0.68	Agreed	

Key: X= Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

Table II showed that all the listed items on causes of spousal violence were all agreed upon. They all had mean values ranging from 2.72 to 3.91 which is above the cutoff point of 2.00. Standard deviation ranged from 0.58 to 1.08 indicating that the mean values were not far from each other.

Table III: Mean and Standard Deviation on Consequences of Spousal Violence on the Victimized Partner

S/N	Consequences of Spousal Violence on the Victimized Partner	Mean	SD	Remark
1. Physical Consequences such as:				
i. Central nervous system disorders	3.87	1.01	Agreed	
ii. Braking of partners bones	2.90	0.94	Agreed	
iii. Bruises	3.96	0.96	Agreed	
iv. Sprains and strains of muscle	3.06	0.97	Agreed	
v. Suffocation	3.48	0.72	Agreed	
vi. Migraines and headaches	2.84	0.94	Agreed	
vii. Chronic pains	3.53	0.50	Agreed	
viii. Circulatory disorders	2.80	0.97	Agreed	
ix. Cardiovascular disorders	2.73	0.95	Agreed	
x. High blood pressure	3.40	0.75	Agreed	
xi. Miscarriage	2.66	0.71	Agreed	
xii. Homicide	3.10	0.88	Agreed	
2. Psychological Consequences such as:				
i. Depression	3.54	0.65	Agreed	
ii. Anxiety	2.89	1.00	Agreed	
iii. Low self-esteem	2.58	0.84	Agreed	

iv.	Fear of intimacy between partners	3.00	1.03	Agreed
v.	Anti-social behaviour	2.86	0.92	Agreed
vi.	Symptoms of post-traumatic stress	3.21	1.06	Agreed
vii.	Suicidal tendencies	3.20	0.76	Agreed
viii.	Sleep disturbances	3.09	1.02	Agreed
ix.	Flash backs	2.92	0.82	Agreed
x.	Replaying assault in the mind	3.80	0.69	Agreed
xi.	Emotional detachments	3.02	1.07	Agreed
3.	Social Consequences such as:			
i.	Isolation	3.30	0.64	Agreed
ii.	Neglect	2.78	0.93	Agreed
iii.	Strained relationship	3.20	0.80	Agreed
iv.	Inability to trust others	2.76	0.91	Agreed
v.	Restricted access to services rendered by people	3.05	1.06	Agreed
vi.	Inability to mix up with others	3.25	0.77	Agreed
vii.	Constant fear and feeling of insecurity	3.01	1.02	Agreed

Key: X= Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

Table III contains the consequences of spousal violence on the victimized spouse. Result on the table revealed that all the listed items were all agreed upon since the mean values were above the cutoff point of 2.00. The mean values ranged from 3.96 to 2.58. The standard deviation ranged from 1.01 to 0.64 indicating that the mean values were not far from each other.

Table IV: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Perceived Effects of Spousal Violence on the Children

S/N	Perceived Effects of Spousal Violence on Children	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Nightmares	3.91	0.92	Agreed
2.	Fatigue and lethargy	2.90	0.73	Agreed
3.	Frequent headaches	3.11	0.96	Agreed
4.	Depression	3.04	0.89	Agreed
5.	Aggressive behavior	2.72	0.91	Agreed
6.	Shame and guilt	2.41	1.04	Agreed
7.	Anxiety	2.30	0.94	Agreed
8.	Fear of abandonment	2.69	1.05	Agreed
9.	Short attention span in school	2.09	0.80	Agreed
10.	Poor anger management	3.52	0.77	Agreed
11.	Difficulty in trusting others	2.90	0.90	Agreed
12.	Play with others becomes exceedingly rough	3.25	0.79	Agreed

Key: X= Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

Table IV indicated that all the listed items on perceived effects of spousal violence on children were all agreed upon. From the analysis, the mean values ranged from 2.09 to 3.94. Standard deviation ranged from 0.73 to 1.05 implying that the mean values were not far from each other.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings in Table I showed that the forms of spousal violence can be classified into physical violence and aggressiveness, sexual violence, emotional and psychological violence. From the analysis, the types of physical violence and aggressiveness included throwing object, beating, scratching, slapping, pushing, hair pulling, grabbing and pulling the penis, and kicking the partner. These findings are in agreement with Sarkar (2010) who reported in his study on domestic violence that most of the female victims reported slapping as the specific act of physical assault (72.73%), followed by fist blow and beating with a stick or rod (18.18% each) and (3%) reported kicking. A multi country study by WHO (2005) reported varying types of domestic violence, ranging from a woman being hit with a fist, kicked, dragged, choked, burnt on purpose, threatened with a weapon, or having a weapon used against her. In the same line of thought, Connie (2009) mentioned that spousal violence can take a number of forms, including physical, verbal, emotional, economical and sexual abuse.

Findings on forms of spousal violence also revealed that sexual violence such as rape and stalking were classified as forms of spousal violence. In line with this finding, Swart (2010) reported that stalking a pattern of repeated unwanted attention and contact by a partner that causes fear or concern for one's own safety. The author further stated that in homes where spousal violence exist, stalking is a common phenomenon. Findings also showed that other forms of spousal violence included emotional and psychological violence such as curses, abuse and exerting control over the partner. In line with the findings, Kay (2015) reported that some forms of spousal violence could be emotional and psychological as it affects the mindsets of the individuals concerned. In further support of the finding, Bakare, Asuquo and Agomoh (2010) reported that sexual violence could be in form of physically forcing a woman to have sexual intercourse against her will or being forced to do something sexual which she found degrading or humiliating. Sarkar (2010) reported that verbal and emotional violence could be in form of being insulted or made feel bad about oneself; being humiliated or belittled in front of others.

Table II showed that the causes of spousal violence could be attributable to individual factors, relationship factors and societal factors. Findings of the study revealed that the individual factors responsible for spousal violence included marrying at a young age, low level of education, alcohol use, drug use, personality disorders, past history of abusing partners, experiencing violence as a child. In support of these findings, Kimball (2015) reported that individual factors causing spousal violence included low level of education among spouses, exposure to violence between parents, sexual abuse during childhood, acceptance of violence at the onset and exposure to other forms of prior abuse. To further buttress the finding, Mcquigg, (2011) deduced that individual factors causing spousal violence included marrying at a very young age, witnessing or experiencing violence as a child, harmful use of alcohol and drugs, personality disorders and past history of abusing partners.

Findings of the study indicated that the relationship factors resulting in spousal violence included, male dominance in the family, disparity in spouses educational levels, dissatisfaction in the relationship, problem of anger management and financial problems. To buttress these

findings, Kimball (2015) noted that in spousal violence, relation factors could be the resultant cause. According to the author, relationship factors included frequent conflict in the relationship, financial and economic stress, man having multiple sex partners, and disparity in educational attainment of the spouses. WHO (2005) reported in their study that the thirty females (90.9%) reported the reason for immediate provocation of violent attack as not obeying or arguing back and (3%) stated that the abuse was for refusing sex. Findings also showed that the societal factors responsible for spousal violence included gender inequality / discrimination in the society, poverty, economic status of partner, weak legal sanctions against spousal violence, weak community sanctums against spousal violence and broad social acceptance of violence as a way to resolve conflict. In support of these findings, Helse (2010) highlighted the societal factors responsible for spousal violence to include poverty, low social and economic status, weak legal sanctions against spousal violence within marriages, lack of woman's civil rights, including restrictive or inequitable divorce and marriage law. In the same line of thought, Helse, Elisberg and Gotimoeller (2010) reported that societal factors make women stay with violent partners. The authors mentioned some of the societal factors to include stigmatization or being labeled a divorcee, name calling and fear of children custody.

Table III revealed that the consequences of spousal violence on the victimized spouse could be physical, psychological and social. Findings revealed that the physical consequences included central nervous system disorders, breaking of partners' bones, bruises, sprains and strains of muscle, suffocation, migraines and headaches, chronic pains, circulatory disorders, cardiovascular disorders, high blood pressure, miscarriage and homicide. In support of these findings, Crofford (2007) reported that the consequences of spousal violence range from mild injuries to very severe cases of assault and homicide. In line with the findings, Black (2011) opined that apart from death and injuries, physical violence by an intimate partner may be associated with a number of adverse health outcomes. In further support of the findings, WHO (2011) reported that in all settings, women who had ever experienced physical or sexual violence, or both, by an intimate partner reported significantly higher levels of emotional distress and were more likely to have thought of suicide, and to have attempted suicide, than women who had never experienced partner violence. Also, Bakare, et. al. (2010) found out in their study that women in abused homes were more likely to have had problems walking and carrying out daily activities, physical injuries and pain, memory loss and dizziness.

Findings indicated that the perceived effects of spousal violence on children included nightmares, fatigue and lethargy, frequent headaches, depression, aggressive behaviour, shame and guilt, anxiety, fear of abandonment, short attention span in school, poor anger management, difficulty in trusting others and play with others becomes exceedingly rough. In line with these findings, Fantuzzo and Mohr (2010) mentioned that children who are exposed to spousal violence experience physical effects such as nightmares, fatigue and lethargy. Kimball (2015) reported that children exposed to spousal violence have a feeling of shame, guilt and self-blame. They exhibit grief for family and personal losses. Helse and Garcia (2002) noted that children from homes where intimate partner violence is practice exhibit fear of abandonment, of

expressing emotions, of the unknown, and for personal injury. Such children show anger and the chaos in their lives exhibiting feelings of depression, helplessness and powerlessness. Such children are aggressive and their behaviour is usually out of control (Johnson, 2006). According to Kimball and Keene (2016), children who have witnessed spousal violence have been shown to have social effects such as Isolation from friends and relatives or strong craving of adult approval. They have difficulty in trusting people and their play with peers gets exceedingly rough. Bauer et al. (2006) reported in their study that behavioural problems among children from homes with spousal violence included anxiety, depression, withdrawal to self and somatic complaints, attention deficit, aggressive behaviour and conduct disorder.

CONCLUSION

Spousal violence is a global issue. It can take different forms such as physical aggressiveness, sexual and psychological/ emotional. It can be caused by individual, relationship and societal factor. It has severe consequences on the victimized spouse which could range from mild injury to homicide. It also affects the children on the long run.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Government need to set up laws that will be active and functional. These laws should persecute perpetrators of any violent crime against spouse.
2. Society should avoid stigmatization of spouses who leave abused marriages.
3. Spouses should seek effective mediation approaches towards resolving conflicts in marriages.
4. Spouses should create a conducive and peaceful environment in their homes as children imitate what is seen in the home, the home is also where a child's behaviour is shaped into adulthood.
5. Friends and relatives of victims of spousal violence should give them support and help, which will give them a feeling of not being alone in the problem.

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