

Health Implication of Domestic Violence against Married Women in Ekiti State

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence against married women is a pervasive issue with profound health implications. The problem of domestic violence not only threatens the immediate safety and well-being of women but also has long-term consequences on their physical and mental health, contributing to chronic health conditions, mental illnesses, and impaired social functioning. The study seeks to fill this gap by examining the health implication of domestic violence against married women in Ekiti state. The research utilized a positional approach methods to provide a holistic view of the issue. A survey was conducted to collect data on the prevalence, types and dimension, effect, causes and consequences of domestic violence experienced, and associated health outcomes. The findings reveal that domestic violence significantly impacts the health of married women, manifesting in physical injuries, such as bruises, fractures, and chronic pain, and psychological issues, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The survey results indicated that women had experienced some form of domestic violence, with physical abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse. Also highlighted the causes, consequences, effects and intimidation tactics used by abusers, which exacerbate mental health issues and hinder women from seeking support. Additionally, economic dependence on the abuser was a significant barrier to leaving abusive relationships. To address the health implications of domestic violence, the study recommends the implementation of comprehensive support systems, including accessible mental health services, legal assistance, and economic empowerment programs for women. Public health initiatives should focus on raising awareness, early intervention, and providing training for healthcare professionals to identify and respond to domestic violence effectively. Policies should be strengthened to protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable, ensuring a multi-faceted approach to mitigate the health impacts of domestic violence on married women.

Keywords: Health implication, Domestic Violence, Married women

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is a global health problem that violates the rights of person. According to United Nation (2023) reports that available data reveals that an estimate 736 million women suffers from one form of domestic violence or another from intimate partner or non-partner at least once in their lifetime. Domestic violence is a widespread problem throughout the developed and developing world and makes serious impact on quality of human life and broader development (Milazzo & Walle, 2019). Violence against women is the manifestation of a historically unequal power relationship between men and women. It is a conditioned response and is not natural or born of biological determinism. In the olden days, violence against women was as a result of the prevalent atmosphere of ignorance and feudalism (Nigam, 2018). Today violence against women is an uncontrollable phenomenon, which is a direct result of the rapid urbanization, industrialization and structural adjustment programmes which are changing the socio-economic scenario of our country.

Married women in Nigeria through the ages have been victimized, humiliated, tortured and exploited (Oginni et al., 2023). There have been incidents of murder rape, abduction and torture from time immemorial. More so, much attempt has not been made to find out the reason why such a socially relevant theme has been left neglected and ignored. According to the World Health Organization (2022) 1 in 3 women have experienced one form of domestic violence globally. It is the most common form of domestic violence that has caught the

attention of international agencies, scholars and the government of nations. According to Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (2023) reported that, 35% of Nigerian women aged 15-49 had experienced physical assault, while a startling 65% have faced emotional, economic, or sexual abuse. In recent times, Nigeria has recorded a great increase in spousal abuse as a result of domestic violence among couples. Between January and December of 2023, Ekiti State alone recorded a total of 179 of such cases. These cases were indicators that domestic violence is on the increase in Nigeria (Tarela et al, 2023; Oginni et al., 2023).

Domestic violence, has been perceived as a global public health challenge (Jaffe, Dawson, & Lee-Straatman, 2020; Yoo-Mi and Scott, 2019). According to Boyes and Fan (2020), about 94% of facial injuries result from incidences of domestic abuse. Some women have also been reported to have paid the ultimate price of death as a result of domestic violence (Yoo-Mi & Scott, 2019). According to Nittis, Hughes, Gray, Ashton (2013), one in every four women who was presented in the emergency department in Nigeria has experienced domestic violence in her life. Hence, domestic abuse is a major health challenge that must be given serious attention globally. In doing this, therefore, the need to determine the remote causes and implications of domestic violence cannot be overemphasized. More attention also needs to be given to rural areas where a lot of domestic violence go unnoticed or unreported due to the strong impact of patriarchal dominance and other cultural interpretations of the role of a man in disciplining members of his household (Ihalainen, et al., 2020).

Domestic violence ranging from 4 to 29 percent is prevalent among women in developing nations. Domestic violence among women in Nigeria varies by region with south-south region having the highest frequency of about 9% and north-central (7%) regions has the least (NDHS, 2018). The prevalence of domestic violence among women has remained high and become a public health concern in recent times. Although domestic violence is common in Ekiti but a significant proportion remained unreported and victims are still suffering in silence which may be due to poor enforcement and implementation of policies, lack of political will, poor funding of programs related to violence (Mengo et al., 2021; Muluneh et al., 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Domestic violence has been observed by different researchers as a problem in the marriage relationship. It threatens the essence of marriage relationship and its effects are felt in every facet of the society, especially in Oyo state, Nigeria where their children are neglected. Measures adopted by the spouses, families, Christians and non-Christians have not succeeded in wiping out the challenge of marital conflict among couples in marriage relationship. It continues to gather momentum and permeates all levels of family relationship. Children from maritally dissatisfied homes are more hostile, hyperactive and aggressive in nature. However, many of the problems these children have are similar to those of children from two-parent families, but these problems seem more difficult to bear or manage when the home is being captained by only one person. But in a situation where the anger and rebellion are all directed towards one person, it may seem worse; if there is only one to bear it, it becomes impossible to share ideas with a partner. Although majority of these married couples usually attend premarital counselling sessions (which are usually organized by religious bodies such as churches and mosques), unfortunately, despite their best intentions, these marriages still break down (Oni, 2007).

Again, there is no doubt that the problem of domestic violence is the major cause of marital disharmony, violence, instability, divorce, separation and, often, the untimely death of one of the married women in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The reported cases of domestic violence in Ekiti State, Nigeria are low compared to the actual reality: many are suffering in silence, merely enduring marriage when it should be enjoyed. The prevalence of cases handled daily in courts of law on domestic violence is progressively high, and even then, the courts are mostly unable to resolve the marital problems presented.

It is important to recognize that most research on domestic violence and other types of marital issues have been conducted with participants from industrialized western societies. Very little data are available about the domestic violence of married women in non-Western societies, particularly among married women in Ekiti State. There is no exception for Nigeria - little has been done in Ekiti State Nigeria, specifically among married women in Ekiti State, and one of the aims of this research is to fill this research gap. Also, most researchers have given priority and attention to the issue of divorce, marital adjustment, stability, marital dissatisfaction,

spousal abuse and satisfaction, with little attention paid to domestic violence despite the effectiveness of research approaches employed for such studies. It is on this basis that this study investigated the health implication of domestic violence on married women in Ekiti state.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the health implication of domestic violence on married women in Ekiti state. Specifically the objective of the study is to examine the types and dimension of domestic violence, investigate the causes and consequences of domestic violence, find the and effects of domestic violence, explore the solution and recommendation made so far on domestic violence

Domestic violence is a significant problem for those whose life is affected by this issue, the social, health and criminal justice agencies that respond to it, and wider society that must bear the costs. Whilst domestic violence is not a new phenomenon, the past thirty years has seen increasing public awareness and a growing political consensus that something needs to be done, even if what should be done is less clear (Holt and Devaney, 2015). Over time our understanding about the presentation, dynamics and impact of domestic violence has developed, resulting in the need to define what is it that society needs to tackle. This, however, has not been a trouble free endeavor, with definitions and understanding of violence varying across research studies, regions and cultural settings. It can be easy to overlook the problems of children that are involved in domestic violence families. Studies have shown high rates of domestic violence, with a significant number of women reporting abuse by their partners, highlighting the urgent need for intervention and awareness in addressing this issue in Nigeria (Aborisade 2023; Aborisade, 2022; Aborisade et al. 2019).

Domestic violence, a longstanding issue, has affected familial relationships globally, manifesting in various degrees such as physical violence, sexual abuse, and infidelity among many others across developed and developing nations. The fight against domestic violence has led to initiatives like the Domestic Violence against Women (DVAM) campaign, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and international agreements such as the African Protocol on Human and People's Rights. Similar to this, the United Nations Office defines domestic violence as gender-based violence, encompassing physical, psychological, and familial abuse against women within their homes (Yta, Umukoro & Ekpe, 2020). This perspective underscores the campaigns and global attention women have gathered over the years revealing only the embedded violence in men's behaviour (Aborisade, 2023; Aborisade & Adedayo, 2020).

In the limited literature on domestic violence against women, it is reported to take different patterns such as using strong rhetoric to disparage a man's character and decency (Drijber et al., 2023). Another pattern of domestic violence is physical violence which comes with it, controlling intimate partners physically by shoving, pinching, choking, and hurling things that might cause physical pain and incapacity (Smith et al. 2017). According to Obarisiagbon (2017), women's justifications and denials of their partners' sex are subtle but hurtful abuses of men. The justifications have an impact on a woman's mental and emotional health. Rape, sexual coercion, or unwelcome sexual contact by or toward either male or female partners is considered an act of full or attempted intimate relationship sexual assault or abuse (Smith et al., 2017). Therefore, in Nigeria, a nation where incidents of rape and various forms of sexual violence often go unreported, the statistics presented here are deeply concerning (Aborisade, 2021).

Notably, the Nigeria Police Force reported a startling increase in rape cases, with 717 recorded cases between January and May of 2022 and a remarkable increase of reported 323 cases over the same period in 2019 (Guardian, 2022; Sahara Reporters Limited, 2020). Furthermore, Moreover, it's worth noting that male offenders frequently employ various forms of psychological aggression against their female spouses or partners. These tactics may include blackmail, deceitfully securing restraining orders, inflicting financial damage, unjustly branding the victim as the wrongdoer, making threats to take away or harm their children, and even resorting to threats of homicide or suicide (Amoo et al., 2018). This is in line with Smith et al (2017) assertion that verbal or nonverbal communication with a goal of harming or controlling the other person constitutes psychological or emotional abuse.

Domestic violence is a global problem and a major public health issue which has attracted the interest of researchers as well as policymakers (Mengo et al., 2021; Muluneh et al., 2021; Simmons et al., 2020). The health, physical, sexual, and the general wellbeing of millions of women have been negatively affected by

violence with its short and long-term consequences (WHO, 2016). Nigeria is one of the societies that recorded the highest rate of domestic violence in the world (Wood et al., 2021). It is worthy of note that, just like other developing countries, there is a paucity of information on the nationwide official statistical data on the prevalence of domestic violence in Nigeria (Muluneh et al., 2021; Wood et al., 2021).

Domestic violence takes place in different forms and across various class and strata but proved to be most prevalent and pervasive against women (Abonyi, Ezech, Onwuka, 2019, Torazi et al., 2020 & UNESCO, 2019). world Health Organization (WHO) report in 2020 revealed that women ages between 15-49 years in Africa are facing domestic violence ranging from physical, economic and emotional attacks hereby leading to one form of health complications of the others. However, as the women tries to endure this, it do not sometimes only lead to their death permanent illness or disability but the consequences also extends to their children by making such children become violence at the slightest provocation as well as abuse of self-esteem (Oyosoro Okafor & Aigbe, 2022). Jahid (2020) posit that domestic violence do not only result to physical injury but it also has other health consequences ranging from emotional, to mental and physical health\, injuries, temporary or permanent disabilities, depression, suicide, gynecological injuries among others

Domestic violence is prevalent among married women in Nigeria. It is synonymous with close partner violence, family violence, beating, domestic abuse or spousal abuse. More complicating is the reality that the social context of violence against women in Nigeria is related to traditional African patriarchal societies, which defines the gendered power structure (Ajayi & Airewele, 2018). To this effects marriage in many societies, a woman surrenders to her husband's exclusive sexual rights and obedience. Traditionally, in Nigeria, as in many other African countries, the beating of wives and children is widely sanctioned as a form of discipline (Ajayi & Airewele, 2018). Consequently, by beating their children, parents believe that they are instilling discipline in them, much the same way as husbands beat their wives—who are also regarded as children and as such prone to indiscipline. The society is basically patriarchal, and women's place within the scheme is absolutely subordinate. Several women are believed to have been subjected to physical, sexual, and psychological violence carried out primarily by husbands, partners, and fathers (Ajayi & Airewele, 2018).

Forms and dimation of domestic violence are numerous for the purpose of this paper I shall dwell more on sexual and emotional violence.

Sexual violence: According to Kertesz et al. (2021), sexual violence refers to actions intended to use the act as a tool to meet the offender's sexual needs, including forcing for sex, intimidating, or seducing. Sexual violence includes any sexual act performed against a person's will. This encompasses marital rape, forced sexual acts, and sexual harassment. The NDHS 2018 reports that 7% of Nigerian women have experienced sexual violence at some point in their lives. Predominantly, it manifests of sexual violations, aggravation and sexual mistreatment. It includes forcing a person or subjecting a person to duress to perform in a sexual action. This is not restricted to females alone; it also includes exploiting a child for sexual activity with or without his consent for child prostitution and pornography (Chen et al., 2019). This involve demand sex whether partner wants or not, demand for oral sex against partner's will, having conjugal relations against partner's will, physically impose sex, make partner engage in anal sex against will, use an item in a sexual manner. Marital rape has been classified as a form of sexual abuse as it involves intimidate partner under marriage coercing one party or the other into sexual activity (Chen et al., 2019).

Emotional Violence: Abuse and violence in form of emotions incorporates undermining an individual or possession or hurting a person's esteem by putting a person at hazard of genuine behavioral, enthusiastic or psychological clutters. Yelling at an accomplice which has been revealed to be the foremost violence by intimate partners (Chen et al., 2019). Constituted in emotional violence are invective, verbal reciprocation, social segregation, scaring or abuse to overwhelm, frequently demanding unnecessary request, victimizing an individual verbally and uncovering a minor to viciousness (Chen et al., 2019). The common profiles of violence detailed were yelling at an accomplice who constituted over 90 per cent slapping or pushing above 75 percent and punching and kicking at 40 per cent (Fricker, Banbury and Visick, 2018). It is in any case exasperating to note that numerous ladies don't know in the event that they had been abused or not. This can be due to the acknowledgment of a few damaging conduct as 'normal'. Many victims of this type of violence often do not testify or report due to apprehension and fear of their abuser cent (Fricker, Banbury and Visick,

2018). Secondly, it demonstrates the lack of belief in the judicial system and reflects the irresponsibility/incapacity of the police force. Some reports even when eventually made are often dismissed as a family affair not a case of violence in structure (Chen et al., 2019).

Case studies on Domestic Violence

According to Umeh (2022) reports that an incident which threw the Nigeria social discourse space agog recently was death of the popular gospel musician, Osinachi Nwachukwu. While it was initially announced that her death was as a result of cancer, it later became known that she died as a result of cluster of blood in the chest from the kicking she allegedly got from her husband, Mr Peter Nwachukwu (Umeh, 2022). While this story, trended in the Nigerian social media space for months, observations and experience of this researcher shows that the incidence of domestic violence often goes unreported by women until significant damage has been done. Sapkota et al., (2019) reported that, violence against women results in both immediate and future consequences, which together results to poverty and undermine entire development. To ascertain the high-level violence in Nigeria, the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in the Vanguard reported that, Oyo State police arrested a man for allegedly setting his wife and son ablaze. The report revealed that Felicia the wife and the son Gbolahan were set ablaze on the 27th December 2013 at about 4am in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. According to the report, the man in questioned accused his wife of engaging in secrets affair outside marriage and also the report also showed that the couple had long history of domestic violence. During their disputes, the report also show that the wife also accused the man of been an ex-convict, so the man was very angry and swore that the woman his wife will not see 2014. So, the man locked up his wife and son in the house and set up his house ablaze (Sapkota et al., 2019).

Amina a 35-year-old woman from Kano State experienced repeated physical abuse from her husband Musa, a 40-year-old trader over a ten-year period. The abuse included hitting, slapping, and kicking. One particularly severe incident involved Musa using a wooden plank to beat Amina, resulting in multiple fractures and internal injuries. Amina sustained serious physical injuries, including a broken arm and ribs. She required extensive medical treatment and prolonged hospitalization. The continuous abuse led to severe anxiety and depression. Amina became withdrawn and exhibited symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The abuse eroded Amina's self-esteem and led to feelings of hopelessness and despair. She struggled with thoughts of suicide.

Chioma a 28-year-old woman from Lagos State was subjected to repeated sexual violence by her partner, including forced sexual acts and marital rape. Despite her objections and resistance, Emeka a 32-year-old businessman coerced her into sexual activities, often using threats and intimidation. Chioma suffered from recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs), sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and chronic pelvic pain due to the repeated assaults. The trauma led to severe depression and anxiety. Chioma experienced frequent panic attacks and had difficulty sleeping due to nightmares. The continuous sexual violence resulted in Chioma developing PTSD. She experienced flashbacks and emotional numbness, struggling with daily functioning.

Causes of Domestic Violence

There are many different theories as to the causes of domestic violence. These include psychological theories that consider personality traits and mental characteristics of the perpetrators, as well as social theories which consider external factors in the perpetrator's environment, such as family structure stress and social learning. As with many phenomena regarding human experience, no single approach appears to cover all cases.

Jealousy: Many cases of domestic violence against women occur due to jealousy when the spouse is either suspected of being unfaithful or is planning to leave the relationship. An evolutionary psychology explanation of such cases of domestic violence against women are that they represent to male attempts to control female reproduction and ensure sexual exclusivity for himself through violence or the threat of violence (Benebo et' al, 2018).

Social Stress: Stress may be increased when a person is living in a family situation and because of the stress the woman may not or consented to the sexual urge of the husband and when such persisted the man may loss

interest in the wife and such leading to deprivation of sex, with increased pressures. Violence is not always caused by stress, but may be one way that some people respond to stress (Benebo et' al, 2018). Couples in poverty may be more likely to experience domestic violence, due to increased stress and conflicts about finances and other aspects (Omang et' al, 2020).

Power and Control: Abusers abuse in order to establish and maintain control over the partner. Abusers' effort to dominate have been attributed to low self-esteem or feelings of inadequacy, unresolved childhood conflicts, the stress of poverty, hostility and resentment toward women (misogyny), personality disorders, genetic tendencies and social cultural influences (Ali et' al, 2023). Most authorities seem to agree that abusive personalities result from a combination of several factors, to varying degrees.

Causative Factors in Domestic Violence

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), it was found that in more than 80 countries in the world, 35% of women suffer physical and or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence by a person with no emotional bond. Most cases of domestic violence occur in their households. Several studies have been conducted to identify the precipitating factors which lead to the cause of domestic violence on women; some of the scholars have attributed some of the causes of domestic abuse from cultural reasons, poverty as a cause, socialization and societal acceptance (WHO, 2022). Many studies have shown that dependency of women upon men was positively related to domestic violence against women. Women who are not economically independent run greater risk of been abused as compared to those who are dependent on their husbands (Davis, 2023). From many cases observed during my internship, it was observed that many women that reported their husband for battering cases are totally dependent upon their husband. Most of them are purely house wife without occupation, so men take advantage of them in this situation especially in Nigeria according to senior welfare officer in the ministry of women affair.

Generally, across the globe, domestic violence against women is carried out by men, inform of riots and account for the overwhelming majority of fire arm related injuries deaths (Omang et' al. 2020). Violent against women is often seen as a gender relations product because it is part of the gender specific constraints experience by women mostly although men still experience it but not frequently. Such gender violence includes verbal abuse. Chepuka et' al (2021) observes that violence against women mostly occur in the service of perpetuating male power and control. And such violence against women includes rape, battery, homicide, incest, psychological abuse, forced prostitution, trafficking in women and sexual harassment.

In looking at the causes of violent against women, Isola (2019) observes that, violent on women is considered normal in most cultures around the world for husband to beat his wife's because the wives are mere property to the husband and the husband have the right to control her behavior. And in such society, it is observed that women who challenge that right will be punished and even in some cases such punishment may take place by merely asking their husband of money and children needs. Some factors that resulted to violent against women according to worldwide studies were as follows: disobedience, talking back, not taking care of the children or home, questioning about money or girlfriends, embarking on a journey without permission, sex refusal, refusing to make food for family, and expressing suspicion of infidelity (Heise et al., 2021). According to Plichta (2022), it is noted that in many cases women share the feelings that men have the right to discipline their wives by applying force. Similarly, in rural areas of Egypt for example, 80% of women also agreed that beating was justify in some certain circumstances (Heise et al., 2021).

Similarly, Isola (2019), pointed out some major causes of domestic violence against women to be incompatibility of partner, insensitivity, disagreement between couples, continued quarrelling, nagging, excess alcohol, neglects, child rebellion, excess drugs use. Also, per Chukwuma and Osarenren (2021), they also pointed out that the causes of domestic violence against women includes the general perception of people that women and children are men's property and they are subject to men authority and guidance. According to Isola (2019), it was revealed that the findings of a study conducted some years ago by an American University argues that family as "one of the most dangerous places to be, apart from the war zone or in a riot, is in the home" (Isola, 2019).

Psychological research has identified several consistent predictors for domestic violence, including temperamental behaviour, substances abuse, gender principles, and exposure to domestic violence amongst others.

Consequences of Domestic Violence against Women

Domestic violence against women is accompany with a lot of consequences. These consequences affect women both social and economic development. Shahama (2022) affirm that, violence against women has received an international recognition to its cumulative effect on societal development. Violence against women has negative implication for agricultural activities in rural areas in terms of food stability and the overall national development (Shahama, 2022). Alubo (2020) maintain that several women suffered series of injuries, disabilities, wounds, and casualties from clashes and many died because of domestic violence against women. As a matter of fact, neither WHO nor UNICEF in Nigeria can accurately account for the number of women that are affected or dead as a result of violence against women. The simple reason is because in the rural areas in Nigeria like in Benue States, it is difficult to get the accurate statistics of women who died because some died without their bodies taken to hospital for record purpose (Alubo 2020).

Ellsberg and Heise (2021) maintain that domestic violence against women is associated with serious health problems that affects both women and their children, including serious injuries are sustained from violence at home, gynecological disorders, adverse pregnancy outcomes, mental health disorders and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Ellsberg and Heise (2021) further affirm that violence can have direct consequences on women's health and it can also increase women risk of future health problems that will have profound effect on agricultural activities and other economic sectors of life. According to (UNDP, 2020), the consequences of violence against women can impact negatively on the productivity, health and the well-being of women as well as intergenerational transmission, resulting to increase poverty thereby undermining development (UNDP, 2020).

Also, WHO (2022) reported that, violence against women results in both immediate and future consequences, which together results to poverty and undermines entire development. Ellsberg, and Heise (2021) maintain that, women who are victims of domestic violence have lower educational attainment and lower income capacity and they are more likely to become isolated and develop symptoms of depression and the consequences for children always start in the earliest stage. For Plichta, victims of domestic violence against women in terms of wife battering tend to deliver babies with lower birth weights and higher risks of prematurity and complications (Plichta, 2022). Plichta further postulated that children who are exposed to abuse are also at risk of being assaulted and developing emotional and behavioral problems. For Plichta it is important to note that, pattern of violence against women and abuses is passed from one generation to another and with children who witness the violence are more likely to become victims of violence as adults (Plichta, 2022).

Furthermore, Burton, et al., (2020) posited that domestic violence causes a high cost burden on the health care system for the treatment of the physical and mental health consequences of violence. Violence against women reduces women contribution at work place by lowering productivity and frequent absence from work. Wife battering as a violence act against women is thus a major barrier to the economic and social development of women. Children who witness wife battering develop serious emotional, behavioral, developmental and academic problems (Burton, et al., 2000). According to them, children who witness domestic violence from their parents may face the consequence of becoming violent themselves both at home and school and some might develop depression and low self-esteem.

Effects of Domestic Violence Against Women

Effect on Children: There has 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 (Davis, 2023). Some emotional and behavioural problems that can result due to domestic violence include increased aggressiveness, anxiety, and changes in how a child socializes with friends, family and authorities. Problems with attitude and

cognition in schools can start developing, along with a lack of skills such as problem-solving. Correlation has been found between the experience of abuse and neglect in childhood and perpetrating domestic violence and sexual abuse in adulthood (Chukwuma & Osarenren, 2021). 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) (Umeh, 2022).

Physical Effect: Bruises, broken bones, head injuries, lacerations and internal bleeding are some of the acute effects of a domestic violence incident that require medical attention and hospitalization (Burton et al., 2020). Some chronic health conditions that have been linked to victims of domestic violence are arthritis, irritable bowel syndrome (Burton et al., 2020). Victims who are pregnant during a domestic violence relationship experience greater risk of miscarriage, pre-term labour, and injury to or death of the foetus (Burton et al., 2020). Physiological and physical development is what affects our body, such as structural differences in the brain or body, sexual orientation. In a study of young children from Sapkota et al (2019), it was reported that children who even sensed a perceived threat to their caregiver were more likely to have negative behavioural and emotional outcomes than other types of childhood stressors. In those children, the most common symptoms were hyperactive arousal, fearfulness, and increased aggression toward peers, compared to children who had not experienced this type of exposure.

Previous studies have shown general behavioral, cognitive, and emotional implications when children are exposed to DV or IPV including; irritability, sleep problems, fear of being alone, immaturity, language development, poor concentration, aggressiveness, antisocial behaviours, anxiety, depression, violence behaviours, low frustration tolerance, problems eating, and being passive or withdrawn. Infants tend to also have sleeping and feeding disorders which can lead to poor weight gain. These physical and mental health outcomes have social and emotional sequel for the individual, the family, the community and the society. Over both the short term and long term, children's physical injuries and mental trouble either interrupts, or ends, their educational and career paths leading to poverty and economic dependence (Ali et al 2019).

Health Effect: Some of the health effects of domestic violence can be minor but some can be severe. Health implications may be physical effect (such as death, injuries, gynecological problems and harmful effect in pregnancy), mental (such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidality, substance abuse or dependence) and/or psychological effect, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, intense fear, somatization, phobias, panic attacks, sleep disorders, and obsessive-compulsive behaviour (WHO 2022). Moreover, the health implications were mostly used in some studies unrelated to domestic violence. In order to fill the gaps in the previous studies and add more to the existing literatures, the present study examined the health implication of domestic violence on married women in Ekiti state, Nigeria. Experts estimated that between 37% to 63% of battered women experienced depression characterized with depressed mood, lack of interest in everyday activities, indecisiveness, inability to concentrate, fatigue, insomnia, feelings of worthlessness, or thoughts of death or suicide (Adejinmi et al., 2022). Risks of suicide is particularly strong for domestic violence victims with PTSD symptoms which is 15 times more than non-sufferers to attempt suicide as reported by Anderson and Bushman (2018). Victims of domestic violence often engage in substance abuse or dependence. Average prevalence rates of 19% across 10 studies for alcohol misuse amongst abused women and 9% across 4 studies for drug misuse have been reported by Akinyugha et al (2022). Prevalence was found to be higher and stronger among women in refuges and increases when violence is severe. Post-traumatic stress was also associated with increased substance misuse such as alcohol by abused women as a form of self-medication (Oginni et al, 2023). Miscarriages have been recorded from domestic violence instances. Post-traumatic stress is a normal reaction to abnormal events that involved threat, death or serious injury. It involves re-experiencing traumatic events (through nightmares, flashbacks and intrusive thoughts), avoidance of trauma-related stimuli, emotional numbing, and hyper-arousal such as restlessness, irritability, hyper vigilance and sleeplessness.

In extreme cases, death had been reported worldwide as a consequence of domestic violence which includes homicides, suicides and other indirect deaths such as street homelessness and ill-health, as well as the miscarriages and foetal deaths resulting from assault trauma (Oche et al., 2020). Higher prevalence of

gynecological problems such as sexually transmitted diseases (STD), vaginal bleeding and infections, decreased sexual desire, pain on intercourse, urinary tract infections (UTIs), unwanted pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, delayed parental care and pregnancy difficulties (low birth weight babies, perinatal deaths and unintended pregnancy) amongst abused women had been linked to forced sex and significantly associated with domestic violence (Gyuse & Ushie, 2020). Domestic violence is one the most common forms of violence against women worldwide which can lead to wide array of health consequences among survivors (Coll et' al, 2020).

Psychological Effect: Among victims who are still living with their perpetrators, high amounts 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. It is reported that 60% of victims meet the diagnostic criteria for depression, either during or after termination of the relationship, and have a greatly increased risk of suicidality (Barnett, 2001). The most commonly referenced psychological effect of domestic violence is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). According to Burton et' al (2020), PTSD (as experienced by victims) is characterized by flashbacks, intrusive images, exaggerated startle response, nightmares, and avoidance of triggers that are associated with the abuse. These symptoms are generally experienced for a long span of time after the victim has left the dangerous situation. Many researchers state that PTSD is possibly the best diagnosis for those suffering from psychological effect of domestic violence, as it accounts for the variety of symptoms commonly experienced by victims of trauma.

Financial Effect: Once victims leave their perpetrator, they can be stunned with the reality of the extent to which the abuse has taken away their autonomy. Due to economic abuse and isolation, the victims usually have very little money of their own and few people on whom they can rely when seeking help. This has been shown to be one of the greatest obstacles facing victims of domestic violence, and the strongest fact that can discourage them from leaving their perpetrators (Umeh, 2022). In addition to lacking financial resources, victims of domestic violence often lack specialized skills, education, and training that are necessary to find gainful employment, and also may have several children to support.

Long-term Effect: Domestic violence can trigger many different responses in victims, all of which are very relevant for a professional working with a victim. Major consequences of domestic violence victimization include psychological/mental health issues and chronic physical health problems. A victim's overwhelming lack of resources can lead to homelessness and poverty. Family life gets disrupted which has a significant effect on children, including poverty (if divorce or separation occurs) and a loss of faith and trust in the institution of the family. These sequels not only affect the quality of life of individuals and communities, but also have long-term effects on social order and cohesion (WHO, 2022). The physical health consequences of domestic violence are often obscure, indirect and emerge over the long term. Social and emotional development is what affects our mind and our behavioural regulations, such as intellectual abilities, mental activities, and behaviours.

Social Effect: When children reach preschool age, and are witnessing domestic violence, they commonly show withdrawn social behaviours, have heightened anxiety and are more fearful. Unfortunately, when children reach school-age, the effects of witnessing domestic violence can impact their educational abilities (Bunch & Hunt, 2018). In a noted study, it was found that children whose parents reported partner violence performed on average 12.2 percentile points lower than children whose parents reported no IPV in the home. Currently, research does not indicate that a child's age makes any significant difference in respect of whether they are more or less affected by their exposure to domestic violence, although the ways in which they are affected may differ. For example, babies living with domestic violence appear to be subject to higher levels of ill health, poorer sleeping habits and excessive screaming, along with disrupted attachment patterns. Research has indicated that children who are exposed to domestic violence are at an increased risk of bullying perpetration toward their peers as well as an increased risk of being a victim of bullying. Difficulty with peer relationships is amplified for children who are residing in domestic violence shelters as they are more likely to be socially isolated, less likely to have close friends, and more likely to have difficulty developing new peer friendships. Some research has indicated that difficulties with social relationships are not long-lasting and diminish over time (Umeh, 2022; Plichta, 2022)

Mental Health Effect: Much research has been conducted examining the link between exposure to domestic violence and internalizing symptoms such as anxiety and depression. Researchers have consistently demonstrated that children who have been exposed to domestic violence have higher levels of anxiety and depression symptoms compared with non-exposed children (Burton et' al. 2020). This relation has been demonstrated with preschool age children, early school-age children and adolescents (Umeh, 2022). Long-term and lasting effects of exposure to domestic violence on internalizing symptoms have also been established by longitudinal studies. Emotional regulation can be defined as the ability to effectively respond to different experiences with a range of socially appropriate emotions. Most research has documented that children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to have diminished emotional regulation compared with non-exposed children. School-age children exposed to domestic violence are more likely than children not exposed to domestic violence to blame themselves for conflict between parents (Ali et' al, 2023). Gender differences were found in one study in which boys, but not girls, had higher levels of self-blame. Another study found that, compared with non-exposed children, children exposed to domestic violence had increased negative affect and were more likely to describe their feelings as negative, such as sadness or anger (Ali et' al, 2023).

Efforts to Combat Domestic Violence in Nigeria

Legislation and Policy: This is a significant legal framework aimed at addressing all forms of violence against persons, particularly women. Also, Child Rights Act 2003 prohibits child marriage and other practices that can lead to domestic violence.

Law Enforcement and Judicial Response: Efforts to train police and judicial officers on handling domestic violence cases are crucial but still inadequate. Some states have established specialized units within the police force to handle domestic violence cases.

Support Services for Victims: There are few shelters and safe houses, primarily run by NGOs, providing temporary refuge for victims. Psychological counseling and rehabilitation services are offered by various organizations to help victims recover. Government and NGOs run campaigns to raise awareness about domestic violence and promote gender equality. Schools and community programs that educate about the rights of women and children and the unacceptability of violence are crucial.

Community Involvement: Engaging traditional and community leaders in the fight against domestic violence can help change societal norms and practices. Local grassroots movements and organizations play a critical role in advocating for change and supporting victims.

Theoretical Framework

Radical feminist theory

Radical and Black feminist theoretical perspectives were employed in this study. Radical feminism is one of the theories founded on the belief that society is based on patriarchal grounds, which creates the marginalization and discrimination of women (Umeh, 2022). This theory was developed during the second wave of feminism in the 1960s. Radical feminists posit that the main source of women's oppression originates from social roles and institutional structures being constructed from male supremacy and patriarchy (Umeh, 2022). Unlike other feminist theories, radical feminism advocates for the complete elimination of patriarchy through the transformation of the entire structure of the society, with particular focus on the eradication of traditional gender roles. To the radical feminist, male domination causes all forms of human operation, including racism and classism (Ali et' al, 2023). To them, the root of patriarchy is traceable to women's childbearing and child rearing responsibilities, which makes them dependent on men. They see men's oppression of women as deliberate, and this ideological justification for such subordination is supported by institutions such as media and religion (Ali et' al, 2023). For women to be to be liberated, radical feminism advocates for the abolition of patriarchy. If institutions are currently gendered, alternative institutions such as women's organizations seeking better health care, day care, and shelters for victims of domestic violence and rape should be developed to meet women's needs (Umeh, 2022). Furthermore, gender inequality, which is

perpetrated and supported by patriarchy, is seen as the basis of violence against women, and the social institutions of marriage and family are special contexts that may promote, maintain, and even support men's use of physical force against women

Empirical Review

Sapkota et al (2019) examines the Interventions for reducing and/or controlling domestic violence among pregnant women in low-and middle-income countries: a systematic review. A sample of 3,716 participants, aged 15 to 67 years, filled in one attitudinal questionnaire and a self-report instrument on abuse perpetration and victimization. Attitudinal data revealed a general disapproval of violence use, with greater violence support among males and married participants. When comparing violence in both relational contexts, the scholars found that, in terms of perpetration, more women and dating partners reported physical abuse and severe forms of physical abuse than married partners. This study is similar to the current study in that the focus on attitude of married and dating partners towards intimate partner violence. However, the study is different to the extent that this study is only concerned with married women, while their study is concerned with both married and single women.

Bunch and Hunt (2018) explores the neighborhood characteristics of domestic violence incidents in the city of Greensboro, North Carolina. The research addresses an important gap in domestic violence research by combining geographic and statistical analyses at the block group level. Geographic data were analyzed using an Optimized Hot Spot Analysis (OHA) along with features selected by penalized Poisson regression model. The OHA was used to identify spatial clusters of high and low values while the penalized Poisson regression model was used to select the important variables from over 7000 candidates. The results of the study revealed that geographic location have a cogent impact on students scholastic adjustment, first the researchers observed that those in the urban schools experience more of domestic violence due to hardship and inability to pay school fees than those in rural schools and this directly influence the way at which the students in urban area adjust scholastically. While this study focused on location, the current study will considered how educational qualification determines women's perception of domestic violence in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

Tjaden and Thoennes (2019) carried out a research on the prevalence, incidence and consequences of violence against women in Columbia, United States of America. The researchers conducted a telephone survey of 8,000 women and 8,000 men about their experiences with rape and physical assault. The study provides empirical data on the prevalence and incidence of rape and physical assault, the prevalence of male-to-female and female-to-male intimate partner violence; the prevalence of rape and physical assault among women of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, the rate of injury among rape and physical assault victims, and injured victims' use of medical services. From their findings, it was observed that physical assault is widespread among American women; 52% of surveyed women said that they were physically assaulted as a child by an adult caretaker or perpetrator, 1.9% said they were physically assaulted in the previous 12 months. The study showed that approximately 1.9 million women are physically assaulted annually in the United States. The survey indicated that 18% of women surveyed said they experienced attempted rape at some time in their life and 0.3% said they experienced a completed.

Itimi et al., (2020) investigated on the prevalence of IPV and describe the coping strategies of the victims of domestic and intimate partner violence. A random sample of consenting women living in an intimate partnership for a minimum of 1 year were served with a three part structured questionnaire which sought information on socio- demographic characteristics, the experience of IPV and the Brief COPE Inventory. SPSS version 17.0 software, Microsoft word and Excel were used in data handling and analysis. Means, percentages, standard deviations, and Chi- square were calculated. $P < 0.05$ was considered to be significant. There was significantly high prevalence of domestic violence against women in this study. Hence, routine screening is advocated by family physicians to elicit abuse in order to avoid the more devastating psychological consequences after the incidence so as to institute appropriate treatment as multiple episodes of abuse appears to be cumulative in effect. The reason for violence mainly borders around the argument with husband and finance issues. The coping strategies utilized by the participants minimally involve substance abuse, but more of a religion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Domestic violence against women therefore deserve to be studied in order to provide possible solution.

1. Comprehensive and extensive premarital counselling should be given to intending couples on how to manage their marital relationship. There should be public enlightenment through the mass media on the negative effects of domestic violence against women, especially wife battery.
2. Religious leaders too should vigorously teach against marital violence in their places of worship. Youths should be encouraged and taught to detest and not imitate brutish treatment of wives around them.
3. Medical professionals are in position to help abused women; after physical treatment, they should refer them to counsellors and psychotherapists. Punishment given to grievously offending husbands should be publicized, so that it can serve as deterrence to others.
4. Security agencies and health agencies should be fortified with more power and wherewithal to fight the prevalence and degree of domestic violence.
5. Special attention is needed to the channeled to victims in terms of care and treatment from the debris of violence as the impact on psychological and emotional angles are far depressive and negative.
6. Law and regulations against domestic violence should be stiffer to deter perpetrators from engaging in such acts and establishing penalties against the crimes of domestic violence.

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