

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT, HISTORY AND DIMENSIONS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN*

Abstract

Domestic violence has turned out to be a global concern with an alarming rate of reported cases propelled by media awareness especially through the civil society organizations. Notwithstanding the foregoing, basic understanding of the totality of domestic violence against women is bereft. Therefore, it was imperative for the aim of this study to espouse the basic understanding of the concept, history and dimensions of domestic violence against women. The research methodology was doctrinal approach, using analytical and descriptive research design. It was observed that a deeper understanding of the concept, history and dimensions of domestic violence against women would conscientise the victim and any concerned person to take the necessary measures against the dastardly act. The main sources of data collection were various legal literatures, both from the physical library and the e-library. The study recommended that not just the civil society organization, but every stakeholder in the academics, politics, and so on should take up the task of sensitizing households and the masses on the concept, history and dimensions of domestic violence against women. Finally, this study was made to be significant to all stakeholders in human right and the vulnerable right.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Women, Abuse, Law

1. Introduction

Domestic violence, also known as domestic abuse, spousal abuse, battering, family violence, and intimate partner violence, is defined as a pattern of abusive behaviours by one partner against another in an intimate relationship such as marriage, dating, family, or cohabitation. Domestic violence, so defined, has many forms, including physical aggression or assault (hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, restraining, slapping, throwing objects), or threats thereof; sexual abuse; emotional abuse; controlling or domineering; intimidation; stalking; passive/covert abuse (e.g., neglect); and deprivation. Alcohol consumption¹ and mental illness can be co-morbid with abuse, and present additional challenges in eliminating domestic violence. Awareness, perception, definition and documentation of domestic violence differs widely from country to country, and from era to era. Domestic violence and abuse is not limited to obvious physical violence. Domestic violence can also mean endangerment, criminal coercion, kidnapping, unlawful imprisonment, trespassing, harassment, and stalking.²

Domestic violence is a type of abuse. It involves injuring someone, usually a spouse or partner, but it can also be a parent, child or other family member. It is a serious problem. It is a common source of injury. Victims may suffer physical injuries such as bruises or broken bones. They may suffer emotionally from depression, anxiety or social isolation. It is hard to know exactly how common domestic violence is, because people often do not report it. There is no typical victim. It happens among people of all ages. It affects those of all levels of income and education.³ A lot of issues could be said to be peculiar to women or better still, the rate at which they involve and affect women is very high in comparison to men. These issues range from violence against women, discrimination, subjugation, injustice, rape, female circumcision or female genital mutilation, prostitution, sexual abuse and slavery, widow inheritance, trafficking in women etc. These issues could be said to be a global phenomenon as they are not limited to Africa alone. Other continents have their own share of all these 'crimes' against women. Domestic abuse, also known as spousal abuse, occurs when one person in an intimate relationship or marriage tries to dominate and control the other person. Domestic abuse that includes physical violence is called domestic violence. Domestic violence and abuses are used for one purpose and one purpose only: to gain and maintain total control over you. An abuser doesn't 'play fair.' Abusers use fear, guilt, shame, and intimidation to wear you down and keep you under his or her thumb. Your abuser may also threaten you, hurt you, or hurt those around you.

Domestic violence/abuse does not discriminate. It happens among heterosexual couples and in same-sex partnerships. It occurs within all age ranges, ethnic backgrounds, and economic levels. And while women are more commonly victimized, men are also abused—especially verbally and emotionally, although sometimes even

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¹S Markowitz, 'The Price of Alcohol, Wife Abuse and Husband Abuse' (2000) 2 *Southern Economic Journal*, 279.

²Medline Plus, 'Domestic Violence' <<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/domesticviolencehtml>> accessed on 4th October, 2021.

³M Smith and J Segal, 'Domestic Violence and Abuse: Signs of Abuse and Abusive Relation' (2012) <http://www.helpguide.org/mental/domestic-violence-abuse-type-s> accessed on 4th October, 2021.

physically as well. The bottom line is that abusive behaviour is never acceptable, whether it's coming from a man, a woman, a teenager, or an older adult. You deserve to feel valued, respected, and safe.⁴

2. The Meaning of Violence against Women

Violence is any kind of behaviour that one person uses to control another through fear and intimidation. It includes emotional and psychological abuse, battering and sexual assault.⁵ However, it can be explained as:

Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, community or condoned by the state, this includes wife battering /beating, sexual abuse of female children, dowry related, violence marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices that are harmful to women. It includes rape, sexual harassment at work or within educational institution, trafficking in women and forced prostitutions.⁶

Violence against women is a term of art used to collectively refer to violent acts that are primarily or exclusively committed against women. It is not limited to physical force so as to damage or injure another. It could be physical, psychological, emotional, economic etc. and may not just be through encounter but could be structural. Similar to hate crime, this type of violence (against women) targets a specific group with the victim's gender as a primary motive. The United Nations General Assembly defines 'Violence against women as 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life'.⁷ A species of violence against women is domestic violence.

Concept of Domestic Violence

This is sometimes referred to as intimate partner violence. It encompasses all acts of violence against women within the context of family or intimate relationship. Women are more likely to be victimized by someone they are intimate with, thus, is commonly called 'Intimate Partner Violence' or (IPV). It is an issue of increasing concern because it has a negative effect on all family members, especially children. Domestic violence is not confined to anyone's socio-economic, ethnic, religious, racial, or age group. Accurate information on the extent of domestic violence is difficult to obtain because of the extensive under reporting for due to cultural restrictions and orientations, many even say nothing of it outside. Women whose husbands engage in drinking, smoking and drugs are more prone to these experiences. In some homes, beating and battering of women are common occurrence just at the instance some flimsy reasons. Uchem⁸ captured it thus:

Domestic violence against women and girls is only one example of women's experiences. There are innumerable other examples of violence and injustice against women. However, the root issue is in negativity attached to female and the positivity that goes with the male in the society and the church. All other gender issues originate from this basic negative orientation towards the female and the positive stance towards the male. For instance, the female is valued less than the male. Consequently, other things associated with the women are automatically considered of less value; for example, women's work, ideas, opinions, perspective, witness, presence, contributions and achievements. The result is a tendency by men (who are not yet conscientized) to exclude women from full participation in the human enterprise.⁹

All forms of domestic abuse have one purpose: to gain and maintain control over the victim. Abusers use many tactics to exert power over their spouse or partner: dominance, humiliation, isolation, threats, intimidation, denial and blame.

3. History of Violence against Women

Some experts believe that the history of violence against women is tied to the history of women being viewed as property and a gender role assigned to be subservient to men and also other women. This is reflected in almost all cultures and even the biblical account of creation in Gen. 2:21-23 lends credence to it. Thus, 'and the lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh.....and the ribs, which the Lord God had taken from man, made him a woman, and brought her unto the man.'¹⁰ Again,

⁴D Obioma et al, 'Women Issues: Violence against Women in Africa- an Exposition' in G.U Ukagba *et al* (eds), *The Kpim of Feminism* (Trafford Publishing, 2010).

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*, 330.

⁷Genesis 2:21-22.

⁸R. Uchem, *Beyond Veiling: A Response to the Issue in Women's Experience of Subjugation on African Christian Cultures* (Snap Press, 2005) 332.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Obioma (n4)330.

the unequal relationship between men and women in the society and even in the church gives room for this violence against women. Through naturally our being male and female has no intrinsic hierarchy, what we call a woman's place in one human culture could be man's place in another. This shows that the orientation of treating women as such is nurtured in man, not from nature. Many kinds of violations of women have one thing in common: they all originate from considering women as men's property. This, in turn, is rooted in patriarchy. That is:

The power (and rule) of the fathers; a familial, social ideological and political system in which men (by force, direct pressure, through ritual, tradition, law and language, customs, education and the division of labour) determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male.¹¹

Women are erroneously required and made to depend on the male provider. Religion and tradition make women to stick to their husbands and suffer in silence and to endure everything so as to save their families. It is a widely accepted view by both male and female folk alike that through the ages the lots of women in the society generally has been of living more or less in bondage. And lots of women in the society generally have been for the most part made object of discrimination and male domination in various forms in the different parts of the world. Violence against women seems to be as old as humanity when her role is 'second class' and to serve the male folk.

Down through the ages women have been regarded as second class citizens. They have stereotype into roles of dependency, submission and passivity...exploited object....defined in the terms of men.....excluded from the centers of power and the decisions making processes in the society and church.¹²

We could therefore say that this obnoxious, oppressive and exploitative picture of women subjugation as a second class citizen and an object is behind all forms of violence against women. Girls and women worldwide across lines of income, class and culture, are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse. Around the world, at least one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex or abuse in some other way-most often by someone she knows including her husband or another male family member. Every continent has its share of the crimes against women and many cultures condone or at least tolerate a certain amount of violence against women. The Igbo nation of Nigeria is not spared of these acts of violence against women even though we have not the statistics of their occurrence and these issues are very much under reported especially, when they involve family members.¹³

Violence or abuse 'is not limited to a single group. It cuts across racial and economic backgrounds; it occurs in the families in every ethnic, economic, religious and educational background'. It involves all acts that result in humiliation, open ridicule and torture. Because violence usually occurs in the privacy of people's homes, it is often shrouded in silence. Yet abuse, assault or murder is not less serious because they occur within the family. Chinua Achebe,¹⁴ in his classical book 'Things Fall Apart', pictured this violence against women in Igbo land as it is epitomized by how Okonkwo ruled his family. He writes: 'Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children.' Again, Okonkwo was reported to have beaten his wife Ojiugo. Okonkwo gave her a sound beating and left her and her only daughter weeping.¹⁵ This was and is still the fate of women in some places today. Okonkwo nearly killed the wife Ojiugo when she made remark against him.

When the wife who had been beaten murmured, Okonkwo heard it, ran madly into his room for the loaded gun, ran out again and aimed at her as she climbed over the dwarf wall of the barn. He pressed the trigger and there was a loud report accompanied by the wail of his wife and children. He threw down the gun and jump into the barn, and there laid the woman, very much shaken and frightened but quite unhurt. He heaved a heavy sigh and went away with the gun.¹⁵

Adichie,¹⁶ in her classical book 'Purple Hibiscus', demonstrated physical and psychological violence against women in Igbo land as it is epitomized by how Eugene Achike ruled his family. She said that after lunch when everybody has gone into his or her room, swift, heavy thuds are heard from papa and mama's bedroom. I sat down, closed my eyes, and started to count: Counting made it seem not long, made it seem not bad. Sometimes it was over before I even got to twenty. I was at nineteen when the sound stopped. I stepped out of my room just as Jaja came out of his, we watch Papa descend. Mama was slung over his shoulder like the jute sacks of rice his

¹¹*Ibid*, 331.

¹²Albegbunam, 'You can be a Saint; Blessed Laura Vicuna' *The Christian Outlook* (N.P., March 7, 2015) 14.

¹³C Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1958) 9.

¹⁴*Ibid*.

¹⁵*Ibid*, 28.

¹⁶C Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* (Farafina, 2006) 33.

factory workers bought in bulk at the same border. There is blood on the floor. We cleaned up the trickle of blood, which trailed away as if someone had carried a leaking jar of red water-colour all the way down stairs. Mama came home the next afternoon, her eyes were vacant like the eyes of those mad people who wandered around the road side garbage dumps in town, pulling grimy, torn canvas bags with their life fragments inside. There was an accident, the baby is gone, she said: 'Mama has been severely beaten by her husband Achike because she was reluctant to visit Father Benedict due to poor health condition and the beating led to her miscarriage.'¹⁷ Still on another occasion, the wife is the victim again. Eugene reaches for a small table and breaks it on her belly. She bleeds profusely and loses a six-week old pregnancy in the end.

You know that small table where we keep the family bible, nne? You father broke it on my belly. My blood finished on that floor even before he took me to St. Agnes. My doctor said there was nothing he could do to save the baby. Mama shook her head slowly. A thin line of tears crawled down her cheeks as though it had been a struggle for them to get out of her eyes. Mama slid down to the floor. She cried for a long time. She cried until my hand, clasp in hers, felt stiff. She cried until Aunty Ifeoma finished cooking. She cried until she fell asleep, her head against the seat of the chair. Her son Jaja laid her on a mattress on the living room floor.¹⁸

Kambili's menstruation started and is giving her cramps in the stomach. Mama and Jaja encourage her to take conflakes and panadol tablets to relieve the pain shortly before mass. On discovering this, Mama and the children receive the beatings of their life as Papa rains down heavy blows on them one after the other with his belt. 'Papa was like a Fulani nomad although he didnot have their spare, tall body as he swung his belt at Mama, Jaja and me'.¹⁹ For staying in the same room with Papa-Nnukwu and refusing to intimate Eugene of the fact, Jaja and Kambili receive severe punishment from Papa. This time it is neither cane nor belt. Papa invites the children separately into the bathroom. Papa takes a kettle of hot water and pours it on Kambili's feet. Adiche vividly portrays it thus:

He lowered the kettle into the tub, tilted it towards my feet. He poured the hot water on my feet, slowly, as if he were conducting an experiment and wanted to see what will happen. I saw the moist steam before I saw the water. I watched the water leave the kettle flowing almost in slow motion in an arc to my feet. The pain of contact was so pure, so scalding. I felt nothing for a second. And then I screamed. I stood in scalding tub; I was too scared to move the skin of my feet would peel off if I tried to step out of the tub. I did not realize that mama had come into the bathroom. Tears were running down her face.²⁰

When Kambili is beaten to the second position at school by Chinwe Jideze, Papa follows her to the school at the beginning of the new term, subtly threatening his daughter not to concede the first position to Chinwe again. He insulted, disgraced and humiliated this girl in front of all the members of her class. The innocent Kambili wanted the ground to open swallow the whole compound. This threat is psychologically etched in her mind for the rest of the term, making her discount every other matter in her life but how to get the first position back. This is a kind of psychologically violence dealt on the poor girl.²¹

4. Dimensions of Domestic Violence

Violence against women includes threatening or actual use of physical, psychological, emotional or sexual abuse against a woman by her family members or other intimates. Commonly behaviours included within the broad category of violence against women include: homicide, domestic violence, partner abuse, and psychological abuse, dating violence, same-sex violence, spousal abuse, woman battering, elder abuse, courtship violence, sexual assault, date rape, acquaintance rape, marital rape and stranger rape. Things that count violence or abuse may be anyone or combination of the following:

Physical Abuse and Domestic Violence

Physical abuse is abuse involving contact intended to cause feelings of intimidation, pain, injury, or other physical suffering or bodily harm. Physical abuse includes hitting, slapping, punching, choking, pushing, burning and other types of contact that result in physical injury to the victim. Physical abuse can also include behaviours such as denying the victim of medical care when needed, depriving the victim of sleep or other functions necessary to live, or forcing the victim to engage in drug/alcohol use against his/her will. If a person is suffering from any physical harm then they are experiencing physical abuse. This pain can be experienced on any level. It can also include inflicting physical injury onto other targets, such as children or pets, in order to cause psychological harm

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 244.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 102.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 192.

²¹*Ibid.*, 46.

to the victim.²² When people talk about domestic violence, they are often referring to the physical abuse of a spouse or intimate partner. Physical abuse is the use of physical force against someone in a way that injures or endangers that person. Physical assault or battering is a crime, whether it occurs inside or outside of the family. The police have the power and authority to protect you from physical attack.²³ Physical abuses usually recurrent and escalates in both frequency and severity. Although most assault on women does not result in death, they do result in physical injury and severe emotional distress. Physical injuries are the most tangible manifestation of domestic violence, yet they are frequently not reported by the women and go unrecognized by the professionals who should intervene. They are often treated as a private issue. The impact of domestic violence in the sphere of total violence against women can be understood through the example that reasonable percentages of murders of women are committed by their husbands or boyfriends. Studies have shown that violence is not always perpetrated as a form of physical violence but can also be psychological and verbal.

In unmarried relationships this is commonly called dating violence whereas in the context of marriage it is called domestic violence. In our Igbo land, many women have in one time or another been victims of beating and battering. Even when these things happen in our homes and neighbourhood, we do not have statistics of their occurrence as they are not reported; hence the true magnitude of the problem is hard to estimate. Though, this type of violence is often portrayed as an issue within the context of heterosexual relationships, daughter-mother relationships, roommate relationships and other domestic relationships involving two women.²⁴ People who are physically abused may have frequent injuries, with the excuse of accidents, dress in clothing designed to hide bruises or scars (e.g. wearing long sleeves in the summer or sunglasses indoors) and frequently miss work, school, or social occasions, without explanation.

Note, it is still abuse notwithstanding the fact that:

- (a) The incidents of physical abuse seem minor when compared to those you have read about, seen on television or heard other women talk about. There is not a 'better' or 'worse' form of physical abuse; you can be severely injured as a result of being pushed, for example.
- (b) The incidents of physical abuse have only occurred one or two times in the relationship. Studies indicate that if your spouse/partner has injured you once, it is likely he will continue to physically assault you.
- (c) The physical assaults stopped when you became passive and gave up your right to express yourself as you desire, to move about freely and see others, and to make decisions. It is not a victory if you have to give up your rights as a person and a partner in exchange for not being assaulted!
- (d) There has not been any physical violence. Many women are emotionally and verbally assaulted. This can be as equally frightening and is often more confusing to try to understand.

Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence

Sexual abuse, or sexual assault, represents a physical attack by the abuser that is accompanied by sexual violence when a woman is forced to have sexual intercourse with her abuser or take part in an unwanted sexual activity. It consists of a range of behaviour that may include pressured sex when the victims does not desire sex, coerced sex by manipulation or threat, physically forced sex or sexual assault accompanied by violence. Victims may be force or coerced to perform a type of sex they do not desire, or at a time they do not want it. For some better victims, this sexual violation is profound and difficult to discuss. Though this happens in Igbo society, women rarely report or discuss it either due to shame or some think that they are to serve man's whims.²⁵ Sexual violence at home is rampant and hardly reported. There are two types of sexual violence commonly experienced by women and girls, with particular emphasis on wife rape and incest. Sexual violence has remained an issue that is largely ignored, and many women do not even know the language to describe their experiences of childhood sexual abuses, harassment and marital rape. Sexual violence can no longer be seen as a crime that only occurs between strangers. It is to be noted that sexual abuse is a form of Physical abuse. Any situation in which you are forced into unwanted, unsafe, or degrading sexual activity is sexual abuse. Forced sex, even by a spouse or intimate partner with whom you also have consensual sex, is an act of aggression and violence. Furthermore, people whose partners abuse them physically and sexually are at a higher risk of being seriously injured or killed. Categories of sexual abuse include:

- (a) Use of physical force to compel a person to engage in a sexual act against his or her will, whether or not the act is completed;
- (b) Attempted or completed sex act involving a person who is unable to understand the nature or condition of the act, unable to decline participation, or unable to communicate unwillingness to

²²*Ibid.*

²³Smith and Segal (n 3) 2.

²⁴Obioma (n 4) 333.

²⁵*Ibid.*

engage in the sexual act, e.g., because of underage immaturity, illness, disability, or the influence of alcohol or other drugs, or because of intimidation or pressure.

Psychological Abuse and Domestic Violence

This is a type of violence that put fear, guilt, shame, low self-esteem and depression on the woman. Psychological abuse of women is under estimated, trivialized and at times difficult to define. Psychological abuse has been reported by abused women to be as damaging as physical battering because it impacts on the self-image of the victim. It often precedes or accompanies physical abuse, but it may occur by itself.²⁶ Emotional abuse (also called psychological abuse or mental abuse) can include humiliating the victim privately or publicly, controlling what the victim can and cannot do, withholding information from the victim, deliberately doing something to make the victim feel diminished or embarrassed, isolating the victim from friends and family, implicitly blackmailing the victim by harming others when the victim expresses independence or happiness, or denying the victim access to money or other basic resources and necessities. Degradation in any form can be considered psychological abuse.²⁷ People who are psychologically abused may have very low self-esteem, even if they used to be confident, show major personality changes (e.g. an outgoing person becomes withdrawn) and are depressed, anxious, or suicidal.

Emotional Abuse and Domestic Violence

Emotional abuse can include verbal abuse and is defined as any behaviour that threatens, intimidates, undermines the victim's self-worth or self-esteem, or controls the victim's freedom.²⁸ This can include threatening the victim with injury or harm, telling the victim that they will be killed if they ever leave the relationship, and public humiliation. Constant criticism, name-calling, and making statements that damage the victim's self-esteem are also common verbal forms of emotional abuse. Often perpetrators will use children to engage in emotional abuse by teaching them to harshly criticize the victim as well.²⁹ Emotional abuse includes conflicting actions or statements which are designed to confuse and create insecurity in the victim. These behaviours also lead the victims to question themselves, causing them to believe that they are making up the abuse or that the abuse is their fault. Emotional abuse includes forceful efforts to isolate the victim, keeping them from contacting friends or family. This is intended to eliminate those who might try to help the victim leave the relationship and to create a lack of resources for them to rely on if they were to leave. Isolation results in damaging the victim's sense of internal strength, leaving them feeling helpless and unable to escape from the situation. People who are being emotionally abused often feel as if they do not own themselves; rather, they may feel that their significant other has nearly total control over them. Women or men undergoing emotional abuse often suffer from depression, which puts them at increased risk for suicide, eating disorders, and drug and alcohol abuse. Abusers are very good at controlling and manipulating their victims. People who have been emotionally abused or battered are depressed, drained, scared, ashamed, and confused.

Verbal Abuse and Domestic Violence

Verbal abuse is a form of emotionally abusive behaviour involving the use of language. Verbal abuse can also be referred to as the act of threatening. Through threatening a person can blatantly say they will harm you in any way and will also be considered as abuse. Verbal abuse may include aggressive actions such as name-calling, blaming, ridicule, disrespect, and criticism, but there are also less obviously aggressive forms of verbal abuse. Statements that may seem benign on the surface can be thinly veiled attempts to humiliate; falsely accuse; or manipulate others to submit to undesirable behaviour, make others feel unwanted and unloved, threaten others economically, or isolate victims from support systems. The abuser may fluctuate between sudden rages and false joviality toward the victim; or may simply show a very different 'face' to the outside world than to the victim. While oral communication is the most common form of verbal abuse, it includes abusive communication in written form.³⁰ This represents a method of control that may consist of verbal attacks and humiliations, including repeated verbal attacks against the victim's worth as an individual or role as a parent, family member, co-workers, friends or community member. The verbal attacks often emphasize the victim's vulnerabilities. In Igbo land they are usually taunted for being barren or giving birth to only female children, for being single up to a certain age etc. and generally they are spoken to in very derogatory manners. Misogynist in everyday speech in Igbo society is so orchestrated. Disdain for women in proverbs, myths and causal remarks, especially in conflict situations; 'After all you are a woman' 'Imagine a woman for that matter' etc 'A woman that urinates in stooping posture' ³¹ All

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷D Follingstad, 'Defining Psychological Abuse of Husbands towards Wives: Contexts, Behaviours and Typologies (2000) *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, (9) 891.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹Uchem(n 8) 334.

these affect the woman sensitivity. When people think of domestic abuse, they often picture battered women who have been physically assaulted. But not all abusive relationships involve violence. Just because you're not battered and bruised doesn't mean you're not being abused. Many men and women suffer from emotional abuse, which is no less destructive. Unfortunately, emotional abuse is often minimized or overlooked—even by the person being abused.³²

Emotional Abuse and Domestic Violence

The aim of emotional abuse is to chip away at your feelings of self-worth and independence. If you're the victim of emotional abuse, you may feel that there is no way out of the relationship or that without your abusive partner you have nothing. Emotional abuse includes verbal abuse such as yelling, name-calling, blaming, and shaming. Isolation, intimidation, and controlling behaviour also fall under emotional abuse. Additionally, abusers who use emotional or psychological abuse often throw in threats of physical violence or other repercussions if you don't do what they want. You may think that physical abuse is far worse than emotional abuse, since physical violence can send you to the hospital and leave you with scars. But, the scars of emotional abuse are very real, and they run deep. In fact, emotional abuse can be just as damaging as physical abuse—sometimes even more so.³³

Economic or Financial Abuse and Domestic Violence

Economic abuse is a form of abuse when one intimate partner has control over the other partner's access to economic resources. Economic abuse may involve preventing a spouse from resource acquisition, limiting the number of resources to use by the victim, or by exploiting economic resources of the victim. The motive behind preventing a spouse from acquiring resources is to diminish the victim's capacity to support oneself, thus forcing him/her to depend on the perpetrator financially, which includes preventing the victim from obtaining education, finding employment, maintaining or advancing their careers, and acquiring assets. In addition, the abuser may also put the victim on an allowance, closely monitor how the victim spends money, spend victim's money without one's consent and creating debt, or completely spend victim's savings to limit available resources.³⁴ This takes place when perpetrators control access to all of the victim's resources such as times, transportation, food, clothing, shelter, insurance and money. He may interfere with her ability to become self-sufficient, and insist that he controls all of the finances. When the victim leaves the violent relationship, the perpetrator may use economics as a way to control or force her to return.³⁵ It is not uncommon in our society where men refuse that their women should have some economic independence by not allowing them to go to school, take up a job or involve in some form of business. So also is the issue of men taking / seizing the salaries of their wives and decide how to spend it. This gives the impression that these women are irresponsible. Remember, an abuser's goal is to control you, and he or she will frequently use money to do so. Economic or financial abuse includes:

- (a) Rigidly controlling your finances.
- (b) Withholding money or credit cards.
- (c) Making you account for every penny you spend.
- (d) Withholding basic necessities (food, clothes, medications, shelter).
- (e) Restricting you to an allowance.
- (f) Preventing you from working or choosing your own career.
- (g) Sabotaging your job (making you miss work, calling constantly).
- (h) Stealing from you or taking your money.³⁶

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

From the foregoing, this article has delved into espousing the necessity for sensitization through a better understanding of the concept, history and dimensions of domestic violence in Nigeria. The findings of this article are thought provoking. They interrogate African customary and religious believes which favoured the patriarchal hegemony. It also purveys a better understanding for peaceful harmony, human development, and life in multi religious society, with the home as the citadel for tutelage. Succinctly put, a deeper understanding of the concept, history and dimensions of domestic violence against women would conscientise the victim of domestic violence and any concerned person to take the necessary measures against the dastardly act. Therefore, it is recommended that not just the civil society organization, but every stakeholder in the academics, politics, and so on should take up the task of sensitizing households and the masses on the concept, history and dimensions of domestic violence against women. Finally, this article is significant to all stakeholders in human right and the vulnerable right. It would be of interest in the further researches to examine the signs, effects, causes, and the legal frame work of domestic violence.

³²Smith and Segal (n 3) 2.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵Obioma (n 4) 334.

³⁶D Berrios, 'Domestic Violence Risk Factors and Outcomes' (2019)*The Western Journal of Medicine* (2)133.