INCIDENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA AND ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS ON THE VICTIMS

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ABSTRACT: *This research aimed to investigate the incidence of domestic violence in Nigeria and its psychological implications on the victims. The objectives included determining the prevalence of domestic violence in Nigeria; identifying the factors contributing to domestic violence; examining the psychological implications on victims; understanding the coping mechanisms utilized by victims and their effectiveness in addressing the psychological implications; and exploring the existing support systems, interventions, and legal frameworks in place to address domestic violence in Nigeria as well as assessing their effectiveness in mitigating the psychological impact on the victims. Review of literatures and interviews were conducted. Socio-economic backgrounds were found to be linked to domestic violence, with lower income levels and limited education being associated with higher prevalence. Based on these findings, it is recommended that there is need for enhanced public and media awareness campaigns to challenge societal norms that perpetuate domestic violence and promote gender equality.*

KEYWORDS: Domestic Violence, Psychological Implications, the Victims

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is a pressing issue that affects societies worldwide, and Nigeria is no exception. In recent years, there has been an increasing awareness and concern regarding the incidence of domestic violence in Nigeria. Specifically, this study will focus on the psychological implications of domestic violence in the country. By examining the prevalence of domestic violence, the various forms it can take, and its negative impact on the mental health of victims, we can gain a deeper understanding of the psychological repercussions faced by Nigerian individuals and families.

It is crucial to grasp the magnitude of domestic violence in Nigeria. Numerous studies and surveys have shed light on the prevalence of this issue. A national study conducted in 2013 revealed that 30.9% of Nigerian women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence at some point in their lives (NBS & ICF International, 2014). Moreover, the study found that nearly 13.9% of the interviewed women reported experiencing violence within the previous 12 months. These alarming statistics demonstrate the high incidence of domestic violence in Nigeria, highlighting the urgent need for intervention and support.

Psychological abuse, such as verbal assault, threats, and intimidation, can be equally devastating. According to a study by Folayan et al. (2015), Nigerian women who experience domestic violence often endure emotional trauma, including depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem.

The psychological implications of domestic violence have far-reaching effects, not only on the immediate victims but also on their families and society as a whole. Research conducted by Ilika et al. (2002) found that Nigerian women who experience domestic violence are at higher risk of developing mental health disorders such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and substance abuse. Children who witness or are exposed to domestic violence may suffer from emotional and behavioral problems, affecting their overall well-being and future relationships (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2016).

By understanding and tackling the psychological implications of domestic violence, Nigeria can take a significant step towards

building a society that is safe, supportive, and free from violence.

Statement of Problem

The problem of domestic violence in Nigeria is a concerning issue that affects thousands of individuals and families. This research aims to shed light on the psychological implications of domestic violence in the Nigerian context. Domestic violence refers to any form of aggressive behavior occurring within the home, typically involving the abuse of a partner, spouse, or family member (Ajah, Ikerionwu, & Nwachukwu, 2017). The incidence of domestic violence in Nigeria is alarmingly high, with a prevalence rate of 28.9% among ever-married women (National Population Commission, 2017). This problem not only leads to physical injuries but also has severe psychological consequences, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. The lack of research focusing on the psychological implications of domestic violence in Nigeria necessitates a deeper analysis to understand the residual effects on victims.

Domestic violence can have severe psychological consequences on its victims. Studies have shown that victims of domestic violence are more likely to experience mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety (Isara, 2017; Nwuba & Amalu, 2016). The constant exposure to violence and the fear of future attacks can lead to a heightened state of anxiety and a sense of helplessness in victims. Additionally, the trauma experienced during these violent incidents can result in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms, including flashbacks, nightmares, and avoidance behavior (Darakshan et al., 2016). The psychological impact of domestic violence can extend far beyond the duration of the abusive relationship, affecting the overall well-being and quality of life of individuals.

Limited awareness and societal attitudes contribute to the perpetuation of domestic violence in Nigeria. Cultural norms and traditional gender roles often normalize violence against women, further enabling acts of domestic violence (Ayotunde, 2015). These societal attitudes not only discourage reporting but also stigmatize victims, leaving them hesitant to seek help or escape toxic relationships. The lack of awareness and education about the psychological implications of domestic violence perpetuates the cycle of abuse, making it essential to raise awareness about the psychological consequences experienced by victims.

The Nigerian legal system also presents challenges for addressing domestic violence and its psychological implications. Although Nigeria has laws criminalizing domestic violence, enforcement remains a major issue (Okereke et al., 2019). This lack of enforcement gives perpetrators a sense of impunity and discourages victims from seeking legal recourse. The failure to address domestic violence effectively contributes to the psychological trauma experienced by victims, as the lack of accountability reinforces their feelings of powerlessness and marginalization.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study is to investigate the incidence of domestic violence in Nigeria. Specifically, the study wants to;

1. Determine the incidence of domestic violence in Nigeria.
2. Investigate the factors contributing to domestic violence in Nigeria.
3. Examine the psychological implications of domestic violence on the victims in Nigeria.
4. Understand the coping mechanisms utilized by victims of domestic violence in Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

The study has both theoretical and practical significance

Theoretical significance: By examining the unique Nigerian context, researchers can uncover specific factors and dynamics that contribute to the occurrence of domestic violence, deepening our understanding of this complex issue.

Secondly, studying the psychological implications of domestic violence in Nigeria can

provide valuable insights into the long-term effects on victims and their families.

Practical significance: The practical significance of studying the incidence of domestic violence in Nigeria lies in its potential to drive positive change at various levels. Firstly, this research can raise awareness among the general public about the prevalence and severity of domestic violence within the Nigerian context.

By identifying specific risk factors associated with domestic violence in Nigeria, policymakers can formulate targeted interventions focused on reducing these risk factors. For instance, it could help in the development of educational programs and campaigns to promote gender equality, challenge patriarchal structures, and empower women within Nigerian society.

By understanding the specific psychological consequences experienced by victims, healthcare providers can tailor their interventions accordingly, offering appropriate counseling, therapy, and support services. This can significantly contribute to the well-being and recovery of survivors, helping them regain control of their lives and break the cycle of violence.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Conceptual Review
Incidence of Domestic Violence in Nigeria

Several studies have shed light on the alarming incidence of domestic violence in Nigeria. A survey conducted by the National Population Commission (NPC) and the National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) reported that approximately 30% of Nigerian women have experienced physical violence in their lifetime (NPC & NDHS, 2018). Furthermore, the survey revealed that 33% of women experienced physical violence from an intimate partner, emphasizing the severity of the problem (NPC & NDHS, 2018). These statistics highlight the urgent need for a comprehensive understanding of the psychological implications for the victims.

Psychological Implications of Domestic Violence

Depression and Anxiety: Various studies have established a strong correlation between domestic violence and mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety. Ezechi, Kalu, Njoku, and Ezechi (2016) conducted a study involving 300 married women in Nigeria and found that those who experienced domestic violence had a higher prevalence of depression and anxiety disorders.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is another psychological consequence significantly associated with domestic violence. Ogunfowokan, Schumm, and Ige (2013) conducted a study involving 500 women and found a high prevalence of PTSD symptoms among survivors of domestic violence in Nigeria. These symptoms included nightmares, flashbacks, and intense distress triggered by reminders of the trauma.

Low Self-esteem and Self-worth: Domestic violence often erodes the self-esteem and sense of self-worth of victims. A study by Oyediran and Isiugo-Abanihe (2005) found that women who experienced domestic violence reported low self-esteem and self-worth due to constant emotional and physical abuse.

Social Isolation and Stigmatization: Domestic violence victims in Nigeria often face social isolation and stigmatization, which further exacerbate the psychological implications. A study by Okemgbo and Omideyi (2008) highlighted how victims of domestic violence are often blamed and stigmatized by their families, communities, and even healthcare providers, hindering their ability to seek help and support.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Sociocultural Theory: Sociocultural theory focuses on the influence of societal norms, values, and cultural practices on the occurrence of domestic violence. It suggests that individuals' behaviors are shaped by the sociocultural context they are part of, including cultural expectations, social norms, and traditional gender roles. In Nigeria, where cultural practices and norms play a dominant role, sociocultural theory helps explain the incidence of domestic violence. Ezenagu, Arene, and Oranu, (2017) conducted a

study on domestic violence among married women in Nigeria using the sociocultural theory. The study found that cultural beliefs, such as the acceptance of wife beating as a corrective measure, increase the likelihood of domestic violence in Nigeria.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Adeniran, Aboyeji, Olagunju, (2020) investigated domestic Violence against Pregnant Women in Nigeria: Investigating the Prevalence and Associated Factors". The participants include 924 pregnant women. Physical, sexual, and emotional violence; age, marital status, educational level, employment status, parity, and antenatal care attendance were all used as the study variables. The study revealed a high prevalence of domestic violence among pregnant women, with 51.5% of participants experiencing abuse. Factors significantly associated with increased risk included younger age, lower education, unemployment, and parity above two. The findings emphasize the urgent need for integrating antenatal care services with domestic violence screening and support systems.

the prevalence of domestic violence in Nigeria: A systematic review. The review includes 36 studies conducted between 2008 and 2018, with varying sample sizes ranging from 200 to over 5,000 participants. The cumulative sample size of these studies is not provided. The variables examined in the review include the types of domestic violence (physical, sexual, psychological), demographic characteristics (gender, age, socioeconomic status), marital status, education levels, and cultural factors. The review finds a high prevalence of domestic violence in Nigeria, with physical violence being the most commonly reported form.

Antai and Oluwole (2017) investigated the Determinants of domestic violence in Nigeria: A quantitative analysis. The study analyzed data from the 2013 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey, which surveyed 38,948 women aged 15-49 years across Nigeria. The study examined the association between domestic violence and various independent variables, including socioeconomic factors (education, wealth index, employment status), demographic characteristics (age, marital status), and contextual factors (region, place of residence).

The study found that 30.4% of women experienced any form of domestic violence in Nigeria. Economic factors, such as low education and low wealth index, were strongly associated with domestic violence. Additionally, age (15-19 years) and being divorced/separated were also significant predictors. Rural areas and some regions had higher rates of domestic violence compared to urban areas.

FINDINGS

1. Incidence of domestic violence: The interview revealed a high incidence of domestic violence in Nigeria across different regions, including both rural and urban areas. The prevalence of domestic violence was found to be higher in lower socio-economic backgrounds.

2. Factors contributing to domestic violence: The findings indicated that cultural and societal norms play a significant role in perpetuating domestic violence in Nigeria. Patriarchal beliefs and gender inequality were identified as influential factors. Economic factors, such as poverty and unemployment, were also found to contribute to domestic violence. Additionally, individual factors such as alcohol and drug abuse and a history of childhood trauma were identified as contributing factors.

3. Psychological implications: The interviewed victims reported experiencing a range of psychological implications as a result of domestic violence. The most common psychological disorders reported were trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.

4. Coping mechanisms: The victims shared various coping mechanisms they utilized to deal with the psychological implications of domestic violence. These included seeking support from family and friends, engaging in therapy or counseling, developing self-care

routines, and participating in support groups.
5. Support systems and legal frameworks: The interview revealed a lack of effective support systems and legal frameworks to address domestic violence in Nigeria.

Implications of the Study

1. The study findings indicate a high incidence of domestic violence in Nigeria, which is prevalent in both rural and urban areas and across different socio-economic backgrounds. This highlights the widespread nature of the issue and the need for comprehensive interventions.
2. Cultural and societal factors significantly contribute to domestic violence in Nigeria. Traditional gender roles, patriarchal norms, and societal acceptance of violence perpetuate the problem. Economic factors, such as financial stress and unemployment, also play a role in increasing the likelihood of violence.
3. The psychological implications of domestic violence on victims in Nigeria are severe. The study reveals that victims often experience trauma, PTSD, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. These psychological disorders have a long-lasting impact on their overall well-being and hinder their ability to lead fulfilling lives.
4. Victims employ various coping mechanisms to deal with the psychological implications of domestic violence. This includes seeking support from family and friends, joining support groups, seeking therapy or counseling, and engaging in self-care practices. The effectiveness of these strategies in addressing the psychological impact varies.
5. The existing support systems, interventions, and legal frame works in Nigeria for addressing domestic volence are inadequate. While some measures have been implemented, such as

helplines, shelters, and awareness campaigns, they are not sufficient to mitigate the psychological impact on victims. Recommendations are warranted to improve these systems.

Limitations of the Study

1. The study relied on semi-structured interviews, which may have introduced bias or limitations in the responses obtained. Factors such as interviewer influence or participant hesitancy may have affected the accuracy of the data.
2. The study focused on the psychological implications of domestic violence and did not extensively explore other dimensions of the issue, such as physical health consequences, economic consequences, or the impact on children in the household.
3. The sample size of the study may have been limited, leading to findings that may not fully represent the diversity and complexity of the domestic violence issue in Nigeria.
4. The study did not delve into the perspectives of perpetrators of domestic violence, which could have provided valuable insights into the underlying causes and motivations for their behavior.
5. The study did not cover the effectiveness of specific interventions or support systems in addressing domestic violence in Nigeria from a quantitative perspective, and relied solely on qualitative data.

Conclusions

From the findings of this research, it can be concluded that domestic violence is a prevalent issue in Nigeria, affecting individuals from various regions, rural and urban areas, and socio-economic backgrounds. Factors contributing to domestic violence in Nigeria stem from cultural, societal, economic, and individual aspects. The psychological implications of domestic violence on victims in Nigeria are severe, leading to the development of trauma,

PTSD, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and other psychological disorders. Domestic violence in Nigeria has far-reaching psychological implications on its victims, and victims employ various coping mechanisms to deal with the aftermath of domestic violence.

Recommendations

1. Enhance public and media awareness campaigns to challenge societal norms that perpetuate domestic violence and promote gender equality.
2. Strengthen the legal frameworks and ensure the proper implementation and enforcement of laws against domestic violence.
3. Improve economic conditions and provide job opportunities to reduce the economic stressors that contribute to domestic violence.
4. Increase the availability and accessibility of mental health services for victims of domestic violence, including counseling, therapy, and trauma-informed care.
5. Establish and expand support systems, such as helplines, shelters, and support groups, to provide comprehensive assistance to victims of domestic violence.
6. Conduct further research that incorporates quantitative methods to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and support systems in addressing the psychological impact of domestic violence in Nigeria.

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