

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: CRYPTOGRAMS, PROPELLERS AND REPERCUSSION*

Abstract

Recognizing abuse is the first step to getting help, since no one is supposed to live in fear of the person they love. This study examined critically domestic violence based on its cryptograms, propellers and repercussion. The research methodology was doctrinal approach, using analytical and descriptive research design. It was observed that a deeper understanding of the cryptograms, propellers and repercussion of domestic violence would conscientise the victim of domestic violence and others 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 victims of domestic violence should not have the fear of quitting the relationship on fear of economic consequence to the expense of their lives. Also, the causes and effects of domestic violence, not just on the individuals but extending to the socio-economic development of a nation, should be made to gain wider publicity. Finally, this study was made to be significant to all stakeholders in human right and the vulnerable right.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Women, Abuse, Causes and Effects

1. Introduction

Domestic violence and abuse can happen to anyone, yet the problem is often overlooked, excused, or denied. This is especially true when the abuse is psychological, rather than physical. Noticing and acknowledging the signs of an abusive relationship are the first step to ending it. No one supposed to live in fear of the person they love. If one recognizes oneself or someone else in some warning signs which describe abuse, the person is expected to reach out for available help. Recognizing abuse is the first step to getting help. Domestic abuse often escalates from threats and verbal abuse to violence. And while physical injury may be the most obvious danger, the emotional and psychological consequences of domestic abuse are also severe. Emotionally, abusive relationships can destroy ones self-worth, lead to anxiety and depression, and make one feels helpless and alone. No one is expected to endure such pains. The first step to breaking free is recognizing that the situation is abusive. Once this is acknowledged, the reality of the abusive situation is exposed for getting help. Basically, there are many signs of an abusive relationship. The most telling sign is fear of partner. In other words, if a spouse feels as if walking on eggshells around the other spouse and having to constantly watch what is said to avoid a blow-up, chances are that the relationship is unhealthy and abusive. Other cryptograms that one may be in an abusive relationship include a partner who belittles or controls the other partner, and breeding the feelings of self-loathing, helplessness, and desperation. Without going deeper into the crux of the matter, succinctly put therefore, this article shall focus on a critical examination of domestic violence based on its cryptograms, propellers and repercussion.

2. Clarification of Concepts

Domestic Violence

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; verbal abuse; sexual abuse; emotional abuse; controlling or domineering; intimidation; stalking; passive/covert abuse (e.g., neglect); and economic 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 differ widely from country to country, and from era to era. Domestic violence and abuse is not limited to obvious physical violence and verbal abuse. Domestic violence can also mean endangerment, criminal coercion, kidnapping, unlawful imprisonment, trespassing, harassment, and stalking.²

Cryptograms

Cryptogram refers to the sign or symbol of something. In the context of this article, cryptograms refer to the signs and symbols that mark out some situations or acts as domestic violence. These signs are obvious through the distillation of some common tests.

*By **Chinwe Patricia ILOKA, LLB, BL, LLM, PhD**, Lecturer, Department of Public and Private Law, Faculty of Law, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus, Anambra State. Phone No.: 08035696281. Email: Chypat4@gmail.com.

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.

Propellers

A Propeller is the drive, push, enablers, impetus, causative, or contributory factor to the prevalent situation. Simply put, in this article, propellers directly refer to causes of domestic violence./

Repercussion

Repercussion is common referred to as the aftermath, impact, consequences, effects, outcome, reverberation, result or upshot of a moral decadence. Specifically in this article, repercussion is used in the strict sense of effects or aftermath of the menace of domestic violence.

3. Nature of Domestic Violence

Violence against Women

Although the exact rates are widely disputed, especially within the United States, there is a large body of cross-cultural evidence that women are subjected to domestic violence significantly more often than men. In addition, there is broad consensus that women are more often subjected to severe forms of abuse and are more likely to be injured by an abusive partner. Women are more often the victims of domestic violence than men and are more likely to suffer injuries and health consequences. Women are battered far more often and far more severely than men.⁴⁸

According to a report by the United States Department of Justice, a survey of 16,000 Americans showed 22.1% of women and 7.4% of men reported being physically assaulted by a current or former spouse, cohabiting partner, boyfriend or girlfriend, or date in their lifetime. A 2010 survey of over 21,000 residents of England and Wales by the UK Home Office showed that 7% of women and 3% of men were victims of domestic abuse in the last year. A study in the United States found that women were 13 times more likely than men to seek medical attention due to injuries related to spousal abuse. Women are more likely than men to be murdered by an intimate partner. Of those killed by an intimate partner about three quarters are female and about a quarter are male. In 1999 in the United States 1,218 women and 424 men were killed by an intimate partner, and 1181 females and 329 males were killed by their intimate partners in 2005. In England and Wales about 100 women are killed by partners or former partners each year while 21 men were killed in 2010. In 2008, in France, 156 women and 27 men were killed by their intimate partner. Domestic violence occurs across the world, in various cultures, and affects people of all economic statuses. According to one study, the percentage of women who have reported being physically abused by an intimate partner varies from 69% to 10% depending on the country. In the United States, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics in 1995 women reported a six times greater rate of intimate partner violence than men. The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) indicates that in 1998 about 876,340 violent crimes were committed in the U.S. against women by their current or former spouses, or boyfriends. According to the Centers for Disease Control, in the United States 4.8 million women suffer intimate partner related physical assaults and rapes and 2.9 million men are victims of physical assault from their partners.³

Violence against Men

Determining how many instances of domestic violence actually involve male victims is difficult. Male domestic violence victims may be reluctant to get help for a number of reasons.⁴ Studies have shown that women who assaulted their male partners were more likely to avoid arrest even when the male victim contacts police. Another study examined the differences in how male and female barterers were treated by the criminal justice system. The study concluded that female intimate violence perpetrators are frequently viewed by law enforcement and the criminal justice system as victims rather than the actual offenders of violence against men. Other studies have also demonstrated a high degree of acceptance of aggression against men by women. A 32-nation study revealed that more than 51% of men and 52% of women felt that there were times when it was appropriate for a wife to slap her husband. By comparison, only 26% of men and 21% of women felt that there were times when it was appropriate for a husband to slap his wife.⁵ Studies have shown many police officers do not treat domestic violence against men as a serious crime, and often will view the male victim as a 'pathetic figure'. It is for this reason, and also the view among many law enforcement officers that men are inherently 'stronger' than women, that male victims are often less likely to report domestic violence than female victims. When and if they do, men are often treated as the aggressor in the situation, and often even placed under arrest.⁶ According to a 2004 survey in Canada, the percentages of males being physically or sexually victimized by their partners was 6% versus 7% for women. However, females reported higher levels of repeated violence and were more likely than men to experience serious

³M Compton, *Clinical Manual of Prevention in Mental Health* (American Psychiatric Publishing, 2010) 245.

⁴A kumar, 'Domestic Violence against Men in India: A perspective' (2009) 3 *Journal of Human Behaviour in the Social Environment*, 290.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*

injuries; 23% of females versus 15% of males were faced with the most serious forms of violence including being beaten, choked, or threatened with or having a gun or knife used against them. Also, 21% of women versus 11% of men were likely to report experiencing more than 10 violent incidents. Women who often experience higher levels of physical or sexual violence from their current partner, were 44% versus only 18% of males to suffer from an injury. Cases in which women are faced with extremely abusive partners, results in the females having to fear for their lives due to the violence they had faced. In addition, statistics show that 34% of women feared for their lives whereas only 10% of males felt this way.⁷

Common Test: Signs that One is in an Abusive Relationship

To determine whether one’s relationship is abusive, one needs to answer the questions below. The more ‘yes’ answers, the more likely it is that one is in an abusive relationship.

(1)	Your Inner Thoughts and Feelings	Your Partner’s Belittling Behavior
	Do you:	Does your partner:
(a)	Feel afraid of your partner much of the time?	Humiliate or yell at you?
(b)	Avoid certain topics out of fear of angering your partner?	Criticize you and put you down?
(c)	Feel that you can’t do anything right for your partner?	Treat you so badly that you’re embarrassed for your friends or family to see?
(d)	Believe that you deserve to be hurt or mistreated?	Ignore or put down your opinions or accomplishments?
(e)	Wonder if you’re the one who is crazy?	Blame you for their abusive behaviour?
(f)	Feel emotionally numb or helpless?	See you as property or a sex object, rather than as a person?
(2)	Your Partner’s Violent Behaviour or Threats	Your Partner’s Controlling Behaviour
	Does your partner:	Does your partner:
(a)	Have a bad and unpredictable temper?	Act excessively jealous and possessive?
(b)	Hurt you, or threaten to hurt or kill you?	Control where you go or what you do?
(c)	Threaten to take your children away or harm them?	Keep you from seeing your friends or family?
(d)	Threaten to commit suicide if you leave?	Limit your access to money, the phone, or the car?
(e)	Force you to have sex?	Limit your access to money, the phone, or the car?
(f)	Destroy your belongings?	Constantly check up on you?

The Abuser’s Choice: Violent and Abusive Behaviour

Despite what many people believe, domestic violence and abuse is not due to the abuser’s loss of control over his or her behaviour. In fact, abusive behaviour and violence is a deliberate choice made by the abuser in order to control the victim.

Abusers Use a Variety of Tactics to Manipulate and Exert their Power

Dominance – Abusive individuals feel in charge of the relationship. They make decisions for their partners and their family. They say what one should do, and expect one to obey without questioning. Partner’s abuser may treat the partner like a servant, child, or even as possession.

Humiliation – An abuser will do everything he or she can to make one feels bad about oneself or defective in some way. After all, if one believes one is worthless and that no one else will want the person, the person is less likely to leave. Insults, name-calling, shaming, and public put-downs are all weapons of abuse designed to erode one’s self-esteem and make one feels powerless.

Isolation – In order to increase dependence, an abusive partner will cut off a fellow partner from the outside world. He or she may keep the other from seeing family or friends, or even prevent the other from going to work or school. A partner may have to seek permission to do anything, go anywhere, or see anyone.

Threats – Abusers commonly use threats to keep their partners from leaving or to scare them into dropping charges. Partner abuser may threaten to hurt or kill the partner, the children, other family members, or even pets. The abuser may also threaten to commit suicide, file false charges against another, or report partner to child services.

⁷W Grady, *Crime in Canadian Context: Debates and Controversies* (Oxford University Press, 2011) 86.

Intimidation – Partner abuser may use a variety of intimidation tactics designed to scare partner into submission. Such tactics include making threatening looks or gestures, smashing things in front of partner, destroying property, hurting partner's pets, or putting weapons on display. The clear message is that if partner does not obey, there will be violent consequences.

Denial and blame – Abusers are very good at making excuses for the inexcusable. They will blame their abusive and violent behaviour on their bad childhood, a bad day, and even on the victims of their abuse. Abusive partner may minimize the abuse or deny that it occurred and commonly shift the responsibility, claiming it is the partner's fault.

Abusers are Able to Control their Behaviour

Abusers pick and choose whom to abuse: They do not insult, threaten, or assault everyone in their life who gives them grief. Usually, they save their abuse for the people closest to them, the ones they claim to love, their partners.

Abusers carefully choose when and where to abuse: They control themselves until no one else is around to see their abusive behaviour. They may act like everything is fine in public, but lash out instantly as soon as the partner is alone.

Abusers are able to stop their abusive behaviour when it benefits them: Most abusers are not out of control. In fact, they are able to immediately stop their abusive behaviour when it is to their advantage to do so, for example, when the police show up or their boss calls.

Violent abusers usually direct their blows where they would not show. Rather than acting out in a mindless rage, many physically violent abusers carefully aim their kicks and punches where the bruises and marks would not show.⁸

Some Instances of Domestic Violence

There are many instances of domestic violence. In fact, they occur daily, if not every minutes around the globe. Most of the cases have gained judicial attention and convictions secured, while others are still undergoing investigations and trial. Some others lack merit for judicial attention, may be due to court technicalities, paucity of evidence, bureaucracy, and low media coverage for public attention. Basically, the media has over time now and more recently brought many cases of domestic violence to the fore burner.⁹ However, most of these cases are not followed to the end and the court decision reverted to the society. In other words, the media creates the publicity at the point of commission and ends its work at that point. Where a court exercises jurisdiction over a reported case of domestic violence instituted before it, there are two things involved but one is certainly going to happen; it is either the suspect would be discharged and acquitted or the suspect would be convicted and sentenced accordingly. Furthermore, the trial court's decision is subject to appeal which ends at the Supreme Court. These are a whole long and tedious process which the media gets lost midway. Therefore, the media are just comfortable at the initial reportage for the public court conviction of the perpetrator of domestic violence.

4. Causes or Propellers 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 perpetrator, as well as social theories which consider external factors in the perpetrator's environment, such as family structure, stress, social learning. As with many phenomena regarding human experience, no single approach appears to cover all cases. Whilst there are many theories regarding what causes one individual to act violently towards an intimate partner or family member, there is also growing concern around apparent intergenerational cycles of domestic violence.

Personality Traits Theory

Psychological theories focus on personality traits and mental characteristics of the offender. Personality traits include sudden bursts of anger, poor impulse control, and poor self-esteem. Various theories suggest that psychopathology and other personality disorders are factors, and that abuse experienced as a child leads some people to be more violent as adults.¹⁰ Possessiveness is one of personality traits in the psychological theory. Many

⁸D Berrios, 'Domestic Violence Risk Factors and Outcomes' The Western Journal of Medicine, (2) (133).

⁹For instance, on the 10th of May, 2002, the Punch Newspaper reported a case of domestic violence about a 9-month old pregnant woman who was beaten to death in Ogun State by her husband and his lover. According to the Punch Newspaper, the man and his lover started beating the pregnant woman when she confronted her husband over his illicit affair with the woman. After beating the woman to death, the two lovers took to their heels, but they were however apprehended by passerby and neighbours. The two lovers have been handed over to the police for further investigation.

J Chukwuma et al, 'No Safe Haven' (Project Alert on Violence against Women, 2002) 17.

¹⁰L Hamberger, 'Personality Correlates of Men who Abuse their Partners: A Cross-Validation Study' (2004) I Journal of Family Violence, 323, L Hamberger, 'Personality Correlates of Men who Batter and Nonviolent men: Some Continuities and

cases of domestic violence against women occur due to jealousy when one partner is either suspected of being unfaithful or is planning to leave the relationship. An evolutionary psychology explanation of such cases of domestic violence against a woman is that they represent male attempts to control female reproduction and ensure sexual exclusivity through violence or the threat of violence.

Behavioural Theory

Behavioural theories draw on the work of behaviour analysts. Applied behaviour analysis uses the basic principles of learning theory to change behaviour. Behavioural theories of domestic violence focus on the use of functional assessment with the goal of reducing episodes of violence to zero rates. This program leads to behaviour therapy. Often by identifying the antecedents and consequences of violent action, the abusers can be taught self-control. Recently more focus has been placed on prevention and a behavioural prevention theory.

Social Theories

Looks at external factors in the offender's environment, such as family structure, stress, social learning, and includes rational choice theories.

Resource theory

Resource theory was suggested by W Goode.¹¹ Women who are most dependent on the spouse for economic wellbeing (e.g. homemakers/housewives, women with handicaps, the unemployed), and are the primary caregivers to their children, fear the increased financial burden if they leave their marriage. Dependency means that they have fewer options and few resources to help them cope with or change their spouse's behaviour. Couples that share power equally experience lower incidence of conflict, and when conflict does arise, are less likely to resort to violence. If one spouse desires control and power in the relationship, the spouse may resort to abuse. This may include coercion and threats, intimidation, emotional abuse, economic abuse, isolation, making light of the situation and blaming the spouse, using children (threatening to take them away), and behaving as 'master of the castle'.¹²

Social stress

Stress may be increased when a person is living in a family situation, with increased pressures. Social stresses, due to inadequate finances or other such problems in a family may further increase tensions. Violence is not always caused by stress, but may be one way that some people respond to stress. Families and couples in poverty may be more likely to experience domestic violence, due to increased stress and conflicts about finances and other aspects. Some speculate that poverty may hinder a man's ability to live up to his idea of 'successful manhood',¹³ thus he fears losing honour and respect. Theory suggests that when he is unable to economically support his wife, and maintain control, he may turn to misogyny, substance abuse, and crime as ways to express masculinity.

Social learning theory

Social learning theory suggests that people learn from observing and modeling after others' behaviour. With positive reinforcement, the behaviour continues. If one observes violent behaviour, one is more likely to imitate it. If there are no negative consequences (e. g. victim accepts the violence, with submission), then the behaviour will likely continue. Often, violence is transmitted from generation to generation in a cyclical manner.

Power and control

In abusive relationships, violence is posited to arise out of a need for power and control of one partner over the other. An abuser will use various tactics of abuse (e.g., physical, verbal, emotional, sexual or financial) in order to establish and maintain control over the partner. Abusers' efforts to dominate their partners have been attributed to low self-esteem or feelings of inadequacy, unresolved childhood conflicts, the stress of poverty, hostility and resentment toward women (misogyny), hostility and resentment toward men (misandry), personality disorders, genetic tendencies and socio-cultural influences, among other possible causative factors.

Discontinuities' (2007) 6 *Journal of Family Violence*, 131., D Hart, 'The Prevalence of Personality Disorder among Wife Assaulters,(2008) 4 *Journal of Personality Disorder*, 329.

¹¹W Goode, 'Force and Violence in the Family' (2008) (4) *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 624.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Ibid.*

5. Effects of Domestic Violence

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.¹⁴ Some chronic health conditions that have been linked to victims of domestic violence are arthritis, irritable bowel syndrome, chronic pain, pelvic pain, ulcers, and migraines. 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.¹⁵ Pregnancy, when coupled with Domestic violence, may amplify health risks. Abuse during pregnancy, whether physical, verbal or emotional, produces adverse effects for both the mother and foetus.

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 committing suicide. In addition to depression, victims of domestic violence also commonly experience long-term anxiety and panic, and are likely to meet the diagnostic criteria for Generalized Anxiety Disorder and Panic Disorder. The most commonly referenced psychological effect of domestic violence is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). 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.¹⁶ These symptoms are generally experienced for a long span of time after the victim has left the dangerous situation.

Financial Consequence

Once victims leave their perpetrators, 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 victim usually has very little money of their own and few people on whom they can rely on for help. This has been shown to be one of the greatest obstacles facing victims of domestic violence, and the strongest factor that can discourage them from leaving their perpetrators. In addition to lacking financial resources, most victims of domestic violence often lack specialized skills, education, and training that are necessary to find gainful employment. Also, they may have several children to support.

Long-term Upshot

Domestic violence can trigger many different responses in victims, all of which are very relevant for any 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.

Influence on children

There has been an increase in acknowledgment that a child who is exposed to domestic abuse during their upbringing will suffer in their developmental and psychological welfare. Because of the awareness of domestic violence that some children have to face, it also generally impacts how the child develops emotionally, socially, behaviourally, as well as cognitively. Some emotional and behavioural problems that children mostly face due to domestic violence include increased aggressiveness, anxiety, and changes in how a child socializes with friends, family, and authorities. Depression, as well as self-esteem issues, can follow due to traumatic experiences.

Effect during pregnancy

Pregnancy, when coupled with Domestic violence, may amplify health risks. Abuse during pregnancy, whether physical, verbal or emotional, produces adverse effects for both the mother and foetus. Domestic violence during pregnancy is categorized as abusive behaviour towards a pregnant woman, where the pattern of abuse can often change in terms of severity and frequency of violence. Abuse may be a long-standing problem in a relationship that continues after a woman becomes pregnant or it may commence in pregnancy. 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.¹⁷

¹⁴R Jones, 'The American College of Obstetrician and Gynecologists: A Decade of Responding to Violence against Women' (1997) *I International Journal of Gynecology and obstetrics*, 43.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷D Berrios, 'Domestic Violence Risk Factors and Outcomes' (2020) (2)*The Western Journal of Medicine*, 133.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The relationship between gender and domestic violence is a controversial topic. There continues to be debate about the rates at which each gender is subjected to domestic violence and whether abused men should be provided the same resources and shelters that exist for female victims. In particular, some studies suggest that men are less likely to report being victims of domestic violence due to social stigmas. Other sources, however, argue that the rate of domestic violence against men is often inflated due to the practice of including self-defence as a form of domestic violence.¹⁸ However, it is worth noted that both men and women have been arrested and convicted of assaulting their partners in both heterosexual and homosexual relationships. The majority of these arrests have been men being arrested for assaulting women, though since the early-to-mid 1990s the number of women arrested has increased significantly, which is often attributed to the implementation of 'Must Arrest' laws. However, the gender neutrality of the enforcement of domestic violence laws remains questionable. The problems in conducting studies that seek to describe violence in terms of gender is the amount of silence, fear and shame that results from abuse within families and relationships. Another is that abusive patterns can tend to seem normal to those who have lived in them for a length of time. Similarly, subtle forms of abuse can be quite transparent even as they set the stage for further abuse seeming normal. Finally, inconsistent definition of what constitutes domestic violence makes definite conclusions difficult to reach when compiling the available studies. 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 species, elements and signs of the acts that fall within the categorization of domestic violence. Also, the causes and effects of domestic violence, not just on the individuals but extending to the socio-economic development of a nation, should be made to gain wider publicity. Furthermore, victims of domestic violence should not have the fear of quitting the relationship on fear of economic consequence to the expense of their lives. Succinctly put, a deeper understanding of the cryptograms, propellers and repercussion of domestic violence would conscientise the victim of domestic violence and any concerned person to take the necessary measures against the dastardly act. 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.

¹⁸M Johnson, 'Research on Domestic Violence in the 1990s: Making Distinctions' (2008) (4)*Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 948.