

Domestic Violence against Women in Udu Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated factors associated with domestic violence against women and its prevalence in Udu Local Government Area of Delta state, Nigeria. A cross sectional survey design was adopted for the study. A questionnaire schedule and an In-depth Interview (IDI) guide were used for data collection, and a multistage sampling method comprising stratification, simple random sampling, purposive sampling method and systematic sampling methods, was adopted in this study. More than half of the respondents were cohabiting (i.e., they were not legally married). The results revealed that that majority of the respondents have experienced physical abuse from their husbands, some were sexually abused. Only a few were not victims of domestic violence. So, there was a high prevalence of domestic violence in the study communities. The major cause of domestic violence, among others, in the study communities was 'arguing back'. Suggestions, that could enhance more peaceful co-existence among intimate partners in the study communities, were made.

Keywords: Domestic, Udu LGA, Violence, Women

Introduction

The growth and development of any family, community, nation and the globe, are not without the contributions of women. They are homemakers, custodians of socio-cultural and basic values of the society, and as such, they play prominent roles in socialisation of the children in every family. Therefore, they deserve care and support by their intimate partners rather they are, in most cases, faced with neglect, discrimination, abuse, and exploitation – they experience one form of domestic violence or the other from their intimate counterparts, relatives, and in-laws.

These forms of domestic violence are prevalent across culture, religion and social status, even in high income region, women have experienced one form of domestic violence or the other (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2013). According to WHO (2017) 1 out of 3 or approximately 35% of women, globally, have experienced some sort of physical or sexual abuse from intimate or non-partner violence at some point of their life. Data on prevalence of domestic violence shows that 36.1% of women experienced it in America, 45.6 in Africa, 40.2% in South East Asia, 36.4% in Eastern Mediterranean, 27.2% in Europe, 27.9% in Western Pacific, and 32.7% (WHO, 2013). For instance, Khandaker (2019) revealed that the continuing persistence of misogynistic gender roles in the society, and the dominance of men over women in an abusive and subjugated manner results in domestic violence in Bangladesh.

In Nigeria, as in many other African countries, the beating of wives and children is widely sanctioned as a form of discipline (Aihie, 2009). One in three of all women and girls aged 15-24 have been a victim of violence. Women both married and unmarried have been subjected to different attacks from men, such as, rape, sexual insult and assault, brutalisation

and victimization. Domestic violence on women has in recent time been on the increase in Nigeria, with victims embarrassed to report such incidences to the right agencies for justice (Aihie, 2009).

Furthermore, Nigeria being patriarchal, these practices of male dominance, and beating of wives are passed from the male child to the other by their fathers, while the mothers, who are, in most cases, the victims, take such violence acts as corrections from their husbands, and in turn, pass it down to their girl child to be submissive to their husbands. Thus, 97.2 per cent of women who experience domestic violence do not report the incidence to the appropriate authorities (Adebayo, 2014).

Domestic violence takes various forms, such as, physical abuse, which could be seen as a maltreatment of a person which can result in harmful and adverse effects in respect of his or her physical health. It includes hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, drowning, suffocating, burning or scalding a person; Sexual abuse, which includes forcible rape to nonphysical forms of pressure that compel a girl or a woman to engage in sex against her will; psychological and emotional abuse, which includes neglect, lack of proper care, verbal insults and a situation whereby such victims is made to feel worthless and less confident of herself (Adeyemo & Bamidele, 2016).

The forms of domestic violence could be classified into three major types. These are a) intimate terrorism, which is demonstrated through the traditional power control role and an "attitude of entitlement" towards the victim; b) situational couple violence: This type is characterised by a particular conflicts which could lead to violent arguments, and continues till it bring about a violence of severe magnitude; and c) violent resistance: This refers to a situation where the female counterpart is trying to resist a looming violence from the male perpetrator, and eventually leads to her physical or sexual abuse and two-fold likelihood of getting injured (Steeh, 2005).

According to Uthman, Lawoko & Moradi (2009) 'neglecting the children', 'going out without informing the husband', and 'suspecting a wife of being unfaithful' were accepted conditions for domestic violence against women in some 17 sub-Saharan African countries. Also, traditional and cultural practices, and family authority are causes of domestic violence against women. Adeyemo and Bamidele (2016) noted that violence in family of origin, lack of education, culture, poverty, religious orientations, weaker sex, and behavioural risk factors as causes of domestic violence. Study showed that for households where abuse occurs and children are present, the children grow up having this violence internalised and normalized in accordance to the modelling of family members (Khandaker Farzana Rahman (2019). However, this study assessed domestic violence against women focusing on physical and sexual abuse. These two forms of abuse could be easily measured, compared to psychological and emotional forms of abuse.

Domestic violence is the manifestation of any physical, psychological, sexual or social abuse stemming from unequal dynamics in an intimate relationship (Khandaker (2019). Such violence is too frequently excused and tolerated in communities and not denounced (Amnesty International, 2005) irrespective of the magnitude of damage it incurs. Udu Local Government Area of Delta state being part of Nigeria, and patriarchal, could not be exonerated from incidence of domestic violence against women by their intimate partners. However, domestic violence against women in this area has not been investigated in available literature. To bridge this gap in knowledge, the following research objectives were formulated:

Objectives of the study

- (i) To find out the causes of domestic violence in Udu Local Government Area.
- (ii) To ascertain the prevalence of domestic violence in the study area.
- (iii) To make suggestions that could enhance more peaceful co-existence among intimate partners in the study communities.

Theoretical framework

This study anchors on liberal feminism theory. It is a theory that believes that gender inequality is created by lowering access for women and girls to civil rights and allocation of social resources such as education and employment (Giddens, 2001; (Saulnier, 1996)). Liberal feminism is derived from the liberal political philosophy in the enlightenment period, and centers on the core ideas of autonomy, universal rights, equal citizenship, and democracy (Tong, 2009). According to Ritzer (2012) liberal feminism argues that (a) all human beings have certain essential features – capacities for reason, moral agency, and self-actualisation, (b) the exercise of these capacities can be secured through legal recognition of universal rights, (c) the inequality between men and women assigned by sex and social constructions having no basis in “nature”, and (d) social change for equality can be produced by an organized appeal to a reasonable public and the use of the state. Thus, where there are situations of patriarchy that recognises intimate male domination, over the female in intimate relationship, adoption of liberal feminist strategies becomes necessary. This would bring about a change in attitudes and perceptions, in order to achieve gender equality. This theory guided the study to investigate whether women (wives) were given, generally, the needed equality in their households as the men (husbands).

Method and materials

Research design

A cross sectional survey design was adopted for the study. The design was considered suitable because it assisted the researcher to collect primary data from a sample through questionnaires. Also, in-depth interview sessions were conducted, with key informants, to substantiate the primary data from the questionnaires. This design was essential for this study for it is economical, and mindful of time limit.

Study area

Udu Local Government Area is one of 25 Local Government Areas in Delta state, with its headquarters at Otor-Udu. The local government is made up of five urban wards and five rural wards. Urban wards: Aladja, Ovwian, Eket, Orhuwhorun and Owase, while rural wards: Egini, Ubogo, Otor-Udu, Emadadja, Ogbe-Udu, comprising three sub-clans: Ewuirhe, Oniere and Urhedjo. Ewuirhe is made up of the following communities: Aladja, Ovwian, Emadadja, Egini, Obubu, Ubogo, Oleri, Otor-Udu, Ogbe-Udu, Ukpiovwin, Ukpereheren, Ayama, Ekrota, Ugbisi, Owrode, Eket-Obotor, Eket-Uburhie, Okolo-Uburhie, Okolor-Obotor, Ovworhokpokpo, Ehiephiho, Egiegi, Epame, Ujevnu, Oghior, and Owase. Oniere comprises of Orhuwhorun, Igbogidi, and Delta Steel Company Township; while Urhedjo is made up of Opete and Enerhen communities.

The Udu Local Government shares common boundaries with the following local government areas: Uvwie on the North, Warri South West on the South, Warri South on the West, and Ughelli South on the East. It is mainly endowed with tropical weather, rainforest with green vegetation, streams, rivers, swamps and petroleum. The people are mainly Urhobos,

involved in fishing, lumbering, palm wine tapping, local gin making, trading, palm oil and kernel production, and farming.

Study population

The study population was that of females who were married or cohabiting, and within the age range of 15-49 years in the study Area, and this is estimated at 1,222,422, According to the National Population Commission (2019) projected data.

Sample size

The sample size for the study was statistically determined to be to be 240 using Taro Yamane's formula (1973). In addition, four women leaders were interviewed using in-depth interview guide.

Sampling procedure

The multistage sampling method comprising stratification, simple random sampling, purposive sampling method and systematic sampling methods, was adopted in this study. The existing 5 urban wards (Aladja, Ovwian, Eket, Orhuwhorun, Owase) and 5 rural wards (Egini, Ubogo, Otor-Udu, Emadadja, and Ogbe-Udu) in the study area were adopted as clusters. The simple random sampling method (by balloting) was applied to select two urban and two rural wards from the clusters, resulting in four selected wards (Urban: Owase and Eket), then rural wards UUbogo and Emadadja). This gave room to adequate representation of urban and rural wards. To reach the respondents, one quarter was selected from each ward using simple random sampling method by balloting; a route was purposively selected in each of the selected quarters. Using systematic sampling technique, every other household in the route was chosen, and one eligible respondent was selected, until the required 240 respondents were attained. Only females who were married or cohabiting, and within the age range of 15-49 years, who were residing in the study area for over one year, were included in the sample size, this was to ensure that the sampled respondents for the questionnaires were knowledgeable enough to provide useful information for this study.

Thereafter, the purposive sampling method was adopted to select the interviewees for the In-depth Interviews (IDIs). These included knowledgeable individuals who were living in the study area for over a year. Thus, there was a total of 4 IDIs. The interviewees for the IDIs were those that were not chosen for the administration of the questionnaire.

Research instruments

In the study, the questionnaire and IDI guide were the instruments for data collection. The questionnaire was the major instrument for quantitative data collection, and it was in two sections. The first section covered respondents' personal data, while the second section covered knowledge of domestic violence against women. The questionnaire was other-administered, to enable the participation of persons with formal and without formal educational background, and for high return rate of the completed questionnaire. On the other hand, the in-depth interview was used to gather detailed qualitative data to substantiate the quantitative data from the questionnaire. A reliability co-efficient of 0.89 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha in order to determine the reliability of the questionnaires.

Data analysis

The data analysis was based on 230 questionnaires, which were duly completed and returned. Analysis of the quantitative data was done using descriptive statistics, such as simple frequency distribution tables, and percentages. The qualitative data from the IDIs were analysed by going through the field data to identify and select concepts, idioms, and expressions which respondents used in describing the phenomenon under investigation.

Results

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

The Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents of interest in this study include age and marital status. Details are clearly shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by Socio-demographic characteristics (n=230)

Age (in Years)	Frequency	Percentage
15 - 21	44	19.1
22 - 28	61	26.5
29 - 35	55	23.9
36 - 42	36	15.7
43 - 49	34	14.8
Marital status		
Married	72	31.3
Cohabiting	116	50.4
Ever Married	42	18.3

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by Socio-demographic characteristics. The table revealed that 19.1 percent of the respondents were within the age range of 15 – 21 years, 26.5 percent were within 22 – 28 years, 23.9 were within 29 – 35 years, while, 15.7 percent and 14.8 percent were within 36 – 42 and 43 – 49 years respectively. Majority of the respondents were within the age range of 22 – 28 years.

Also, Table 1 revealed that most of the respondents were into cohabiting (50.4%), followed by those who were legally married (31.3%), while those ever married (i.e. those who were widow, separated and divorced) constituted 18.3 percent. These shows that cohabiting is very much in practice in the study area, and this could result in high rate of domestic violence against women in the study communities. Similarly, the IDI interviewees emphasized that cohabiting was a common practice in the study area.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by acts of domestic violence experienced from husbands (n=230)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Pushing/kicking	60	26
Throwing things at/dragging	48	20.9
Slapping/punching	72	31.3
Forced intercourse	28	12.2
None	22	9.6

Table 2 above shows that 26 percent of the respondents experienced pushing/kicking, 20.9 percent experienced throwing things at/dragging, 31.3 percent experienced slapping/punching from their husbands, a few (12.2%) had forced intercourse, while only 9.6 percent had not experienced acts of domestic violence from their husbands in the study area. Physical abuse (78.2%) was more prevalent compare to sexual abuse 12.2%). This result is not surprising, this is because patriarchal system of household is solely practiced in the study communities. The outcomes of the IDIs, across the study area, corroborate this finding.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by causes of act(s) of domestic violence by husbands (n=208)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Arguing back	58	27.9
Barrenness	28	13.5
Disobedience	42	20.2
Intoxication	46	22.1
Unfaithfulness	34	16.3

Table 3 above indicates that out of the respondents who experienced acts of violence from their husbands, 27.9 percent said that the causes were due to arguing back, 13.5 percent indicated barrenness, disobedience scored 20.2 percent, intoxication 22.1 percent, and unfaithfulness 16.3 percent. Barrenness and unfaithfulness were least considered; this is because most of the husbands married two and above wives. Thus, any of the wives who is confirmed unfaithful is divorced immediately, and the barren could be in the marriage or decides to leave without violence in most cases. This finding was buttressed by the interviewees across the study area.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by husband justifications of act(s) of domestic violence (n=208)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Husband justifies act(s)	151	72.6
Husband does not justify act(s)	57	27.4

Table 4 shows that majority of the respondents (72.6%) agreed that their husbands always justify their acts of domestic violence, while only 27.4 percent said that their husbands do not justify their acts of violence; such acts, in most cases, are due to intoxications. On the other hand, the acts are due to assumed rights of the husbands to correction any member of the family (the wives inclusive).

Discussion

This study assessed domestic violence against women focusing on physical and sexual abuse. These two forms of abuse could be easily measured, compared to psychological and emotional forms of abuse. The study found that more than half of the respondents (50.4%) were cohabiting (i.e., they were not legally married). The results revealed that majority (78.2%) of the respondents have experienced physical abuse (pushing/kicking, throwing things at/dragging, and slapping/punching) from their husbands, 12.2 percent were sexually abused (forced intercourse). Only a small proportion (9.6) were not victims of domestic violence. This shows a high prevalence of domestic violence in the study communities. Similarly, Yusuf, Arulogun, Oladepo & Olowookere(2011)in 48 population-based surveys conducted in Nigeria, revealed that 10 to 69% of the women reported assault by intimate partners.

The study found that the major cause of domestic violence in the study communities was ‘arguing back’ (27.9%). This was followed by intoxication. Others were barrenness, disobedience, and unfaithfulness. This finding almost negates previous result which showed that

'neglecting the children', 'going out without informing the husband', and 'suspecting a wife of being unfaithful' were accepted conditions for domestic violence against women in some 17 sub-Saharan African countries (Uthman, Lawoko & Moradi, 2009).

The study indicates that the husbands who were the perpetrators of domestic violence against their wives, were mainly justifying their acts. This shows the dominant characteristic of the males over the female partners in their intimate relationships. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic society with three predominant tribes of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. This finding conforms with the views that cultural practices of these three major ethnic groups and the rest minority groups give women in this society a second fiddle role to play (Bakare, Asuquo & Agomoh, 2010; Khandaker (2019)). Thus, the beating of wives is widely sanctioned as a form of discipline (Aihie, 2009).

Implications to social work practice

This study revealed that domestic violence, in the form of physical and sexual abuse, is prevalent in the study communities. These were as a result of 'arguing back', intoxication, barrenness, disobedience, and unfaithfulness of wives. This finding calls for the need for professional social workers in Nigeria.

This would enable trained professional social workers to provide the needed assessment and therapies towards a gradual eradication or alteration of existing obnoxious norms, values, traditions, and beliefs that encourage inequality in the study communities. This would allow the application of liberal feminism theory which assists individuals, groups and communities to instil gender equality in their social relationships, particularly, in their intimate dealings. Also, the social workers will work with the individuals, families, groups, and the communities to enable them to understand strategies of optimal social functioning to bring about peaceful relationships among intimate partners in Udu Local Government Area of Delta state.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research explored and assessed the causes and prevalence of domestic violence against women in Udu Local Government Area of Delta state, Nigeria. A cross sectional survey design was adopted for the study; quantitative and qualitative instruments were used in the collection of data for the study.

Majority of the respondents were cohabiting (i.e., not legally married). Physical abuse, comprising pushing/kicking, throwing things at/dragging, and slapping/punching, was prevalence in the area as against sexual abuse. The major causes of domestic violence in the study communities were 'arguing back', intoxication, barrenness, disobedience, and unfaithfulness of wives. The study area being patriarchal system, the husbands justified their beating of wives as a correctional method.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made, to enhance more peaceful co-existence among intimate partners in the study communities:

1. There is need for governments, across the three tiers, to formulate liberal feminist thoughts and strategies-based policies, and programmes. This will provide equal opportunities to both males and females.
2. It is paramount to have professional social workers in each community to carry out casework and group work. They will provide the needed therapy towards a gradual eradication or alteration of existing obnoxious norms, values, traditions, and beliefs that encourage inequality in the study area, and other communities.

3. Also, the social workers will work with the individuals and families to understand the strategies of social functioning. This will lead to peaceful relationships among intimate partners in the study area and elsewhere.

Limitations of the Study

The study has some limitations, firstly, only four communities were sampled for the study; secondly, the study covered two forms of domestic violence, which are physical and sexual abuse. Thus, the conclusion drawn from the study may not be generalised for all the communities in Udu Local Government Area of Delta state, Nigeria. There may be need, therefore, to select more communities to draw a more generalised conclusion.

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