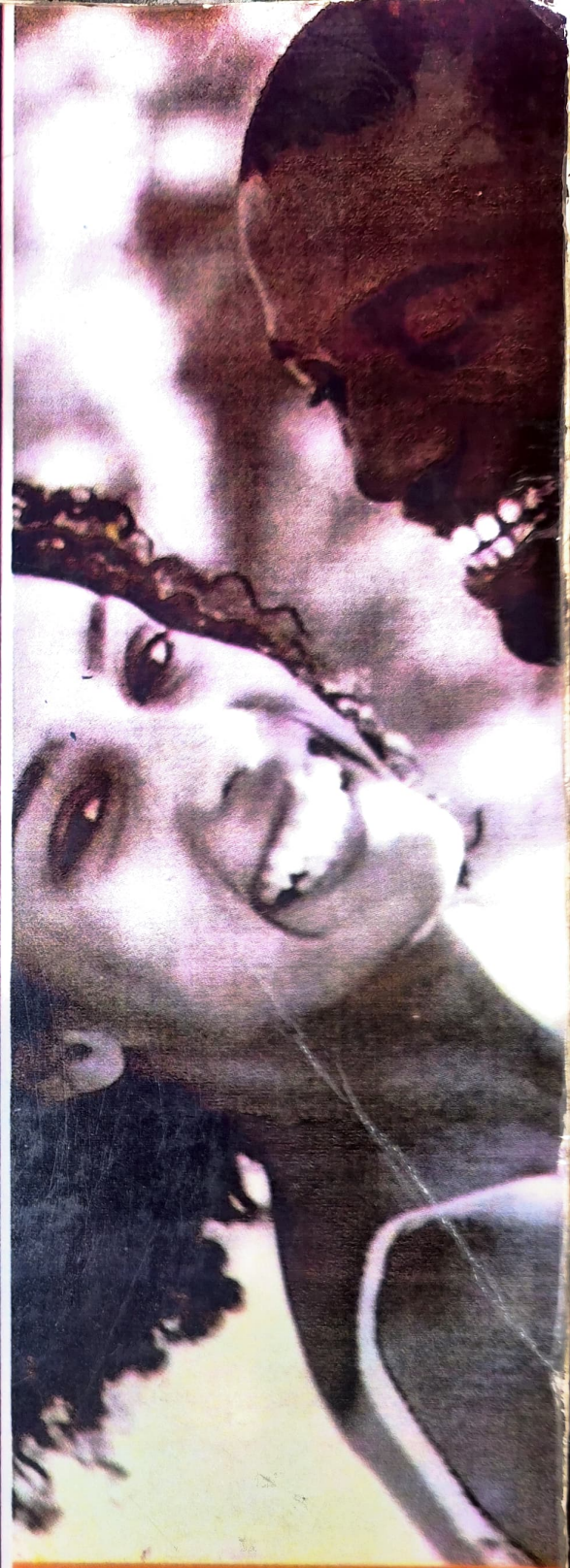


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ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A STRATEGY FOR EMPOWERING FEMALE SURVIVORS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship has become accepted as an imperative means to improve livelihood, boost job creation and ensure economic independence. Economic dependence on their abusers is one of the reasons battered women may not quit abusive relationships, hence the need to have a steady means of sustenance both for themselves and their children. In-depth interview from ten female survivors of Intimate partner violence, were analysed using the content analysis procedure, which was further predicated on the 1988 Gondolf and Fisher Survivor theory. The study revealed that female survivors of IPV were able to cater to their needs through the financial aids received from the State Government and also through their participation in the skill training and acquisition programmes put in place by the State. Entrepreneurship, when embraced can be the solution to this over-reliance of women on their abusive partners. This paper looks at the role entrepreneurship can play in empowering women especially those who suffer economic abuse in intimate relationships.

Keywords: Empowerment, Intimate Partner Violence, Female, Victim, Entrepreneurship

Introduction

Globally, a large percentage of intimate partner violence (IPV) victims, are women. An estimated 1 in 3 women fall victim of violent and harmful actions at the hands of a loved one especially a spouse or an intimate partner. Many of these women are not able to leave such toxic relationships because they are not able to support themselves financially should they leave. Those who experience economic abuse and isolation usually have little or no savings they can call their own, thus making them stay in such relationship. Evidence from literature shows that approximately one out of three (35%) women worldwide has experienced violence either physically or sexually by their partners in their lifetime (WHO, 2017). Globally, as many as 38% of murdered women died from violence committed by an intimate partner (WHO, 2013). For instance, in Russia, 12,000 women die every year as a result of intimate partner violence. In Pakistan, 80% of women there are victims of intimate partner violence (Ali, Naylor, Croot & O'Cathain, 2015). In Bangladesh 50% of the women are abused, violated, or murdered by their husbands, in the United States, at least 1.8 million women are assaulted every year by the men in their lives, and 25% of women in the UK will become victims of intimate partner violence during their lifetime (WHO, 2013).

In Nigeria, studies reveal that about 28 per cent of all women, which is almost one third of all Nigerian women are victims of IPV, this number is quite significant because women make up almost half of the country's population (NDHS, 2013). Victims of IPV are not able to contribute significantly to the economy as majority fall within the age bracket of the Nigerian

labour force 19-49 for females and 16-59 for males and cannot participate productively at work due to absenteeism. According to the International Labour Organisation, World Bank and the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, 2015, the age range of the working class is between 15-64 years. Reduced work hours and low educational attainment lead to significant income loss for those experiencing IPV particularly women, this further hinders IPV victims from achieving personal and economic growth or even leaving such abusive relationships.

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2012) "defines intimate partner violence as any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological, or sexual harm to those in that relationship." Intimate partner violence refers to contact sexual, verbal and physical violence or stalking victimization that has a related impact on normal everyday activities such as missing work (Peterson, Kearns, McIntosh, Estefan, Nicolaidis et al., 2018). Intimate partner violence poses a serious threat to victims' physical, reproductive, mental and sexual health in all parts of the world (Krahe, 2019).

Several reasons have been cited for the perpetration and experience of IPV. They include jealousy and low self-esteem (Fareo, 2015), low level of Education (Adebayo & Kolawole, 2013), financial dependence, certain religious and cultural practices (Ishola, 2016) and so on. Perpetrators often view their actions as normal and justifiable. Male perpetrators of intimate violence blame their actions mostly on intoxication, provocation, punishment for erring partners and so on (James-Hawkins, Hennik, Bangacaya & Yount, 2018).

Economic abuse focuses on creating financial dependency on the perpetrator, it includes actions that controls the victim's capacity to make, utilize and sustain financial resources hence intimidating their economic independence, security and their potential to be self-sufficient (Adams, Sullivan, Bybee & Greeson, 2008). Economic abuse includes controlling and setting a limit to the victim's access to financial resources through monitoring how such victim spends money; holding back or hiding jointly earned and saved money; being untruthful about jointly owned or shared assets and properties; withholding money so victim cannot have the opportunity to get basic necessities like food, a place to sleep, clothing and/or medications (Stylianous, 2018). Sometimes, economic effects of intimate partner violence victimization may last for as long as three years post the IPV experience (Adams, Tolman, Bybee, Sullivan, Kennedy, 2012).

Adams, Tolman, Bybee, Sullivan & Kennedy (2012), argued that getting stable jobs serve a mediating role on the impact of economic abuse for female victims of intimate partner violence especially those with low earnings in a bid to being economically independent. However, most victims who experience economic abuse may also suffer other forms of abuse and may not be able to acquire, the needed educational qualifications that ensures a stable employment, hence the reason to empower such women through entrepreneurship.

As espoused by Rothman, Hathaway, Stidsen & De Vries (2007) when victims are economically productive they enjoy improved finances; their safety physically is promoted; self-regard increases; there is an improvement in social networks experienced and enjoyed; they are furnished with mental rest and they become motivated to pursue their lives' purpose. These findings by Rothman et al., 2007 argues that being able to provide for one's self plays an essential and positive role in the lives of IPV survivors.

Women entrepreneurship refers to the processes of business creation and ownership, which ensures the empowerment of women's economic stability as well as the position they occupy within the society. Empowerment through entrepreneurship and independent financial status of female victims of IPV is a bi-directional relationship. In one direction, empowerment through entrepreneurship ensures that women victims of IPV can support themselves once they get out of their abusive situation. In the other direction, women IPV victims do not have to remain in abusive relationships especially those who are solely dependent on their abusers for livelihood.

Adegoroye and Adegoroye (2008) in a study revealed that the absence of finance and lack of access to credit facilities militate against women's economic development and personal advancement, women are unable to access loans due to certain practices that discourages female inheritance or the ownership of properties that can serve as collateral when the need to seek for loan arises. Similarly, Egharevba, Eguavoen, Azuh, Iruonagbe and Chiazor (2016) argued that to achieve financial freedom for women through provisions of soft loans or Agricultural aids, barriers to owning properties that may serve as collateral will have to be removed. The World Bank estimated that about 66 percent of the world's work are performed by women, with close to 50 percent producing the globally available food but only about 10 percent earning the world's income and only a meagre 1 percent. Although the women population in the world is at 49.6 percent only 40.8 percent of them work in the formal sector (Singh, 2012).

In few societies where women have access to land ownership, research shows that they are able to access grants and financial aids which further improves their earning and productive capacities (George, Olokoyo, Osabuohien, Efobi and Beecroft, 2015). Once these limitations are addressed, female survivors of intimate partner violence are then able to be financially independent from their abusers.

Gondolf and Fisher's Survivor Theory

The survivor theory's first fundamental idea is that a history of violence causes battered women to use inventive coping mechanisms to seek support, such as flattering the batterer and finding help from their families. When these avenues of assistance fail, the battered woman searches for other solutions and uses various tactics to stop the violence. According to the survivor theory, battered women consistently seek support and use coping mechanisms in the abusive relationship.

Secondly, according to Gondolf and Fisher's theory, the victim's fear is triggered by a lack of choices, know-how, and resources, rather than learned helplessness, which prevents her from fleeing the abuser. When a battered woman seeks outside aid, she often experiences an inefficient bureaucracy, a shortage of adequate services, and public indifference. This lack of practical options, combined with the victim's lack of financial resources, makes it likely that the battered women will stay and try to change their batterer rather than leave and face the unknown.

Thirdly, building on the first tenet of this theory, it is believed that the victim actively seeks support from various formal and informal sources. A close friend, for example, would be an informal support source, while a shelter would be a formal help source. According to Gondolf and Fisher, the assistance received from these sources is insufficient. The researchers conclude that leaving a batterer is a challenging route for a survivor to take because of these inadequacies.

Lastly, according to the survivor theory, the aforementioned sources' inability to intervene systematically and definitively causes the violence cycle to continue unabated. Gondolf and Fisher also related the lack of successful assistance to a variant of the learned helplessness theory, stating that aid organizations are overburdened and under-resourced. Notwithstanding the case, the theorists argued that the battered woman's plight can be better understood by asking if she sought help and what happened when she did, rather than questioning her choice not to leave the abusive relationship.

Methodology

This study adopted the qualitative research approach utilising in-depth interview to explore the use of financial empowerment as a strategy for female survivors of intimate partner violence in Lagos State, Nigeria. The primary research covered both quantitative and qualitative research techniques. However, the report for this paper was exclusively based on the data extracted from 10 in-depth interviews among female survivors of intimate partner violence.

Analysis for this paper covered only 10 IPV survivors. The analysis endeavoured to identify how IPV survivors utilise financial empowerment programmes as a coping strategy to deal with the aftermath of economic abuse in intimate relationships. Participants' reviews were used to ensure the integrity and validity of the data. At the end of each interview, the written responses were read aloud to ensure accuracy and a semblance of agreement or re-confirmation of the responses.

Results

According to the findings of the study, the women interviewed were between the ages of 18 and 56 and were either married or cohabiting with an intimate partner. The vast majority of them were no longer living together, meaning they were either divorced or on the verge of divorce. They had been married for a total of four years on average. Only four of the respondents had no formal education. Women who experienced physical, sexual and economic violence, and who were financially reliant on their spouses were specifically selected as respondents for this study.

Entrepreneurship awareness and support

Awareness of skill acquisition trainings and availability of State grants was not common among the respondents. Only one survivor had prior knowledge of the existence of the programmes put in place by the State Government in partnership with other non-governmental stakeholders. Responses from the women further revealed how they became aware of the skill trainings. One respondent had this to say: "the first time I heard about the grant for starting up a business was when I came to report my husband to the DSVRT office. I did not know of their office before now or what they do" (woman, age 35). The only survivor who had prior knowledge revealed she heard about it through an enlightenment program she attended a few years back.

Excerpts from those enjoying their newly found source of livelihood are as follows:

"I am very happy that the children are back in school, since I can now pay the school fees. No more one term in school one term out of school." (woman, age 41).

"I didn't initially like the idea of learning hairdressing, because I was not aware that funds will be made available after the training to help me set up the saloon. I make roughly 12,000 naira everyweek" (woman, 29).

"Having a small scale business gives me this feeling of being free at last. I no longer have to wait on my husband for money. Sometimes I would have even bought the food or

whatever it is, we need money for before he comes back home, if he repays me fine, if he doesn't fine" (woman, 45).

I think I am at the happiest I have ever been. For the first time in years I am able to contribute to the upkeep of my children and mother. Even though it is not so much, but at least something is coming from me (woman, 39).

Discussion

This study provided understanding into the role of entrepreneurship through skill acquisition and how it can be used strategically to empower female survivors of IPV. Economic empowerment refers to the capacity to make and work on decisions that involve the control over and allocation of financial resources and profits (Golla, Malhotra, Nanda & Mehra, 2011).

When discussing on women empowerment, there are some basic categories, they are social, educational, economic and political. Closely related to economic empowerment which is the main focus of this paper is the social entitlement or empowerment. Social empowerment entails the act of creating a sense of independence, increased self-esteem, collective action or singularly ensuring that social interactions and institutions do not leave out those who are perceived as impoverished people and keep them in penury. Economic empowerment on the other hand, is the development of a reasoning capability that looks beyond immediate daily survival but rather a thought and action process that allows individuals exercise a higher level of influence and control over both their assets and life choices, decisions made around making investments and seizing opportunities in order to increase their income. Economic empowerment of women is also a major master plan in handling issues of gender inequality. These empowerments can be achieved through some life-changing forms of social shielding, availability of soft loans/microfinance with low interest and skills training (Eyben, Kabeer & Cornwall, 2008).

A skill training program is organized by the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team in collaboration with the Ministry of Women Affairs. During the tenure of former governor Akinwumi Ambode (2015-2019), the Lagos State government formed a trust fund that provides startup capital and soft loans to survivors in need. All the women interviewed had received or was going through some skill acquisition program. This is because to succeed and advance economically, women need the skills and resources to compete (Golla et al., 2011). These skills are provided through the Lagos State Domestic and sexual violence response team, Ministry of Women Affairs and other NGOs. This result is also in line with Postmus, (2010) and Postmus, Plummer, McMahon, and Zurlo (2013), who argued that financial literacy initiatives are indeed the most effective ways of fostering economic empowerment. Economic self-efficacy is the assumption that one has the tools, options, and confidence to succeed as a result of this experience. The main informant interviewed emphasized the importance of financial self-sufficiency, as many survivors, especially women, rely on their spouses for survival. The increase in awareness and skills needed to make sound financial decisions and access capital is referred to as financial literacy. Furthermore, women empowerment programs may reduce intimate partner violence by improving independence, increasing bargaining abilities, and reducing socio-economic pressures (Angelucci & Heath, 2020).

Limitations encountered

Due to the stigmatization and sensitivity surrounding the experience of intimate partner violence, the identification and enrollment of IPV survivors was quite challenging.

Conclusion and recommendations

Entrepreneurship, in recent times is seen as a necessary tool for improving livelihood, increasing job growth, and ensuring economic freedom. One of the reasons abused women do not leave abusive relationships is their economic dependency on their abusers, necessitating the need to provide a stable source of income for themselves and their children. The study concluded that even though they occupy a perceived undesirable position in society, women victims of IPV through entrepreneurship, are able to contribute to their country's economic growth. Being able to cater to their basic needs personally has also given female survivors a sense of independence. Lastly survivors are able to cope financially with the aftermath of separation or marriage dissolution. There is however a need to continue to empower women who seek formal help and who are dependent solely on their abusive partners for livelihood, through learning of vocational trades in order to become entrepreneurs. They may also be placed on temporary jobs in line with their qualification, while starting up their desired businesses. Also there is the need to make available low interest soft loans or bank credits for such women as start-up capitals for their business. Finally, the payment of spousal maintenance or upkeep should be enforced after the separation of spouses or the dissolution of their unions, especially when children are involved.

Conflict of interest

We declare no conflict of interest

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