

ETHICS IN HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN IN NIGERIA: AN UNSPOKEN TRUTH

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Abstract: In Nigeria, domestic violence against men is uncommon. Aside from providing security and emotional support, a family should provide the safest environment for a child to grow. Domestic violence, on the other hand, is prevalent in Nigerian families and societies. Domestic violence was previously thought to be perpetrated by men against women, and that men were not victims of domestic violence in any way. According to recent studies, domestic violence against men in Nigeria is no longer a rarity, but rather a reality with varying degrees of consequences for individuals and society as a whole. It is against this backdrop that the researcher investigates the silent problem of domestic violence against men in Nigeria, the unspoken truth about gender-based violence. The purpose of this article is to examine the various sources of domestic violence against men and the importance of ethics in human relationships. The qualitative analysis method was used in this study to reveal the existence of domestic violence against men in Nigeria. As a result, the research relied on secondary sources such as journals, text, and internet sources. The concept of violence and domestic violence were examined, as well as domestic violence against men in Nigeria and the discrimination of victims. Hence, the study recommends, amongst others, that professionals such as social workers, psychologists, and counsellors should be included among the court officials who assist the magistrate in elaborating on the type of abuse the victims may be experiencing.

Keywords: Violence, domestic violence, men, abuse and ethics

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INTRODUCTION

Physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, financial abuse, and acts of omission are all examples of domestic violence perpetrated by intimate partners and other family members (UNICEF IRC, 2000). Domestic violence is thus a combination of physical and coercive behaviours used to manipulate and dominate another competent adult or adolescent in order to gain compliance and dependence (Kerr, Levine, & Woolard, 2007).

The social and traditional media have recently been flooded with horrific stories of women brutally killing and injuring their husbands for various reasons. Domestic abuse, also known as spousal abuse, battering, family abuse, and, more recently, intimate partner violence (IPV), has received little attention, in part because men are viewed as stronger vessels by society, and society does not believe that they can be abused, as the general belief is that only women are victims of domestic violence. Surprisingly, some men who are subjected to physical and domestic abuse go unnoticed because they believe no one cares. Such men are reduced to a butt of society jokes even when they try to confide in someone. As a result, they remain invisible victims.

Domestic violence against men is a relatively unrecognized phenomenon. Domestic violence literature, both international and local (Nigeria) literature, as well as scholarly literature and other popular media, is biased against men and only targets women and children. According to Maboreke (2009), the majority, if not all, African societies are patriarchal, and violence against men is not discussed because men are thought to be capable of self-defence. Unfortunately, in African society, a man who reports his wife as abusing him is considered a weakling. This could explain why domestic violence research appears to have been limited to women.

The overall implication of this development explains why violence against men frequently goes unnoticed, leaving the scope of the problem unknown and understudied in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that the researcher investigates the silent problem of domestic violence against men in Nigeria, the unspoken truth about gender-based violence. The purpose of this article is to examine the various sources of domestic violence against men and the importance of ethics in human relationships. The qualitative analysis method was used in this study to reveal the existence of domestic violence against men in Nigeria. As a result, the research relied on secondary sources such as journals, text, and internet sources.

What is Violence?

Any English-language dictionary defines "violence" as the exercise or an instance of physical force, usually causing or intended to cause injury or destruction. The emphasis in this definition is on physical force aimed at inflicting visible damage, such as injuries or destruction, and nothing is said about less visible but extremely dangerous forms of violence, such as emotional or psychological violence. The dictionary definition, presumably, reflects the most common perception of violence, and latently refers to the fact that violence is often not seen or perceived until it becomes visible. As a result, it is not only the witnesses of violence who are unaware of what is taking place in front of their eyes; in many cases, those who are experiencing the violence are unaware that they are victims. As a result, neither society nor victims of violence take the necessary steps to combat the problem.

What is Domestic Violence?

Wife abuse, marital assault, woman battery, spouse abuse, wife beating, conjugal violence, intimate violence, battering, and partner abuse are just a

few examples of domestic violence. These terms are sometimes used interchangeably to refer to the problem, while other times a specific term is used to reflect a specific meaning (for example, "woman abuse" to emphasize the fact that the majority of victims are women). Domestic violence is defined by a variety of behavioural and legal definitions in addition to these terms. Because there are so many different terms and definitions for domestic violence, there can be a lack of clarity about what it means, leading to inconsistencies in identification, assessment, and interventions, as well as in research (Ganley, 2002).

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive tactics used by one person against another, including physical, psychological, sexual, financial, and emotional abuse, with the goal of establishing and maintaining power and control. Domestic violence can occur in any type of intimate relationship, including married couples, dating couples, couples who live together, couples who have children in common, same-sex partners, people who were previously in a relationship with the abuser, and teen dating relationships. Abusive behaviours are not signs of being angry or out of control. An abuser chooses to have power and control over his or her victim. Physical, emotional, sexual, social, and financial abuses are all forms of abuse.

Domestic violence is defined in the Nigerian Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act of 2015 as any act, omission, commission, or conduct of the respondent that constitutes domestic violence (Ngozi et al., 2018):

(a) Harms or injuries or endangers the health, safety, life, limb or well-being, whether mental or physical, of the aggrieved person or trend to do so and includes causing physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and financial abuse; or

(b) Harasses, harms, injures or endangers the aggrieved person with a view to coerce her or any other person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for any dowry or other property or valuable security; or

(c) Has the effect of threatening the aggrieved person or any person related to her by any conduct mentioned in Clause (a) or Clause (b); or

(d) Otherwise injures or causes harm, whether physical or mental, to the aggrieved person (Abakare, 2021).

Literature Review

Domestic violence against men is a term that refers to violence perpetrated by a man's intimate partner against him (Sugg, Thompson, Thompson, Majuro, & Rivara, 1999). It's a distinct finding (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Because of its rarity, it has been relegated to a minor role; as a result, Taft, Hegarty, and Flood (2001) concluded in their review that, while male victims of domestic violence do exist, male victims of other forms of male violence are more common.

Though Stets and Straus (1990) claimed in their 1985 survey that women are just as violent as men when it comes to acts, but men are more violent when it comes to injuries, several authors have consistently reported higher rates of domestic violence against women than men (Coker et al., 2002; Rennison, 2003; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). The majority of assaults are minor and involve pushing, grabbing, shoving, slapping, and hitting. Rape (Tjaden & Theonnes; 2000) and homicide were among the most serious assaults (Fox & Zawitz; 2004). Women in their twenties were more aggressive than women in their forties and fifties.

Domestic violence against men in Nigeria is no longer a rarity, according to Deinye (2008), Namadi (2017), and Adebayo (2014), but it is a reality, and its prevalence is increasing. Barber (2008)

confirmed this when he stated that every 14.6 seconds, a male is abused by his female partner. True, the subject of men being abused by their wives in any form is a delicate or sensitive one. Men, in general, are concerned about the stigma and ridicule they might face if they admit that their spouses are violent toward them. Domestic violence against men does exist, according to Mutepfa (2009), and women are capable of abusing men in marriage. According to Kumar's (2012) research, husbands are also victims of physical aggression. Domestic violence against men does exist, according to Namadi (2017), and it takes many forms. His research debunks the long-held belief that husbands are the ones who treat their wives cruelly and violently. Domestic violence against men is a reality in today's Nigeria, he concludes based on his research. Drunkenness, infidelity, and financial misappropriation have all been identified as causes of domestic violence in Nigeria (Ilika et al., 2002).

One of the most pressing social issues in Nigeria today is husband battery, also known as intimate partner violence (IPV) or domestic violence, which primarily affects men. According to Oti, Paul, and Duru (2017), the issue has become a national topic, especially since the media is awash with reports of spousal murders and attacks that cause harm. The rising incidence and prevalence of this problem, as well as the gradual systematic erosion of family values, has thus become a topic worth looking into. When the term "domestic violence" is mentioned, the first thing that comes to mind is the long-standing and widespread beating, molestation, and brutalization of women by their husbands. This implies that women are the primary target of abusers and will continue to be so. Odumakin (2006) was concerned about the alarming rate of domestic violence, particularly against women. He pointed out that only a tiny fraction of the 2,400 cases of domestic

violence handled by her office 2 involved men. This supports the argument that women are frequently held to be the victims of domestic violence. Men who are victims of domestic violence, according to McKeown and Kidd (2003), face a society that believes wives are the only victims and husbands are the abusers. The numerous media campaigns against domestic violence against women and the sympathy and support they receive, while male victims are treated with utter disbelief, reinforce this general notion (Cleary, 2003). Abuse against men has risen to the fore in recent years, as the media has reported on some horrific and heinous murders committed by women against their husbands. In fact, men are traditionally viewed as the aggressors, while women are viewed as the victims. There is little or no research on the dangers a man faces if he is assaulted by a woman in a romantic relationship (Heise and Gottenmoeller, 1999).

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN IN NIGERIA AND THE DISCRIMINATION OF VICTIMS

Males made up 70,400 (32%), while females made up 149,600 (68%). There were 48 victims of domestic violence identified, with 5 (10.4 percent) of them being males. Domestic violence was found to be 0.022 percent prevalent in the clinic. Domestic violence against men was found to be 0.0023% of the time. The patients seen in the clinic ranged in age from 17 to 79 years old, with a mean of 45.86 6.18 years. The majority of the patients were between the ages of 30 and 49, with 41,751 (28.67%) males and 103,877 (71.33%) females (Deinye & Gbeneol, 2009).

Some case reports of men who were abused by their wives in Nigeria are summarized below:

Victoria Gagariga murdered her husband, Henry Gagariga, in their home in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, on February 4,

2015. Following three years of court proceedings, the trial judge found her guilty and sentenced her to death by hanging (Nwachukwu, 2018). Similarly, Maryam Sanda of Wuse 2, Abuja, stabbed and killed her husband, Haliru Bello Bilyaminu (Osazuwa and Ibom, 2018). In Delta State, the High Court in Effurun found Mrs. Mary Attah guilty of murdering her husband, Pastor Darlington Attah, with a kitchen knife on July 6, 2012, after immobilizing him by rubbing pepper on his face. She was not satisfied, so she doused her bleeding husband in gasoline and set him on fire.

In a similar vein, on February 2, 2016, Yewande Oyediran, an Ibadan-based lawyer, knifed her husband, Lowo Oyediran, to death at their 30, Adeniyi layout, Abidi-Odan, Akobo, Ibadan home. On November 27, 2017, the state high court in Ibadan found her guilty of the crime and sentenced her to seven years in prison (Adezion, 2018). On the 3rd of May, 2018, one Barr. Udemé stabbed her husband, Otike Odubi, to death at Diamond Estate, Sangotedo, Lagos State. She then proceeded to sever the man's penis and place it on his right hand (Nwafor, 2018).

The tragedy is that men who find themselves in this situation hide and refuse to openly discuss their experiences, fearing that doing so will bruise their egos and expose them to ridicule in a patriarchal society. It is a misnomer to say I was beaten by my wife! It's unheard of in a patriarchal society dominated by men. As a result, such men prefer to suffer in silence until the situation becomes critical, at which point they will most likely die (Adebayo, 2014). While women are the majority of victims of domestic violence, male-oriented abuse is more common than many people believe. Men are naturally stronger than women, but that does not mean they are entitled to have their way all of the time. The issue is that the man who is the victim of domestic violence is

rarely listened to. Even though he has bruises all over him, he is assumed to be the aggressor first. When it comes to gaining custody of his children from an abusive mother, an abused man faces a lack of resources, police skepticism, and other major legal obstacles (Aderonke, 2013). The various advocacy and sensitization efforts are largely geared toward women victims, leaving men to suffer in silence. Female and male victims, as well as their abusers, have a lot in common. The most significant difference is that male victims are in the same situation as women were 30 years ago. Their problem is dismissed as insignificant, or they are blamed, and there are few resources available to male victims. Three-quarters of men who call an abuse shelter or hotline say the organization only helps women, and nearly two-thirds say they are treated like the abuser rather than the victim. Despite what research has shown since 1977, University of New Hampshire researcher Murray Straus calls it "selective inattention" because of the total focus on female victims.

Types of Domestic Violence Against Men

Domestic violence against men can take many forms, but the most common ones are as follows:

Verbal abuse: this is when a man's integrity and dignity are questioned by using excessive language. It could also take the form of mockery or insult. In Nigeria, it is common to see a woman pour out various invectives on her husband during a quarrel or disagreement, ranging from "you are not ashamed," "it is only in the house that you have power," "God will punish you," "lazy man," and "your mates have houses and cars but you have nothing."

Physical assault: this usually entails making physical contact with another person with the intent of causing serious bodily harm, pain, or impairment.

Pushing, pinching, and property damage are examples of this type of abuse, according to the Cork Rape Crisis Centre (2002), and it can happen at any time or place, as Dobash and Dobash (2000) point out. In Nigeria, a man who has been physically abused by his wife can be identified by finger marks on his face and bites on his body. In extreme cases, he has suffered injuries to his head and legs as a result of the use of sharp objects such as knives.

Sexual abuse: this type of abuse is most commonly perpetrated against men, and it is the most difficult to disclose due to the emotional pain it causes. When men are accused of forcing their wives to have sex in Nigeria, women are accused of abusing their partners by denying them sexual intimacy. Some Nigerian women have a habit of denying their spouse's sexual advances by claiming to have headaches or be tired. They mock, deride, and use demoralizing words on their spouse at other times. It is not uncommon for a woman to ask her partner if sex is food. Obarisiagbon (2017) notes that these are subtle but damaging abuses against men, while frowning and condemning them.

Psychological abuse: this refers to a wife's degrading or humiliating behaviour toward her husband, which may include repeated insults, ridicule, or name-calling, as well as maintaining malice. Quinn (1997) defines malice (physical abuse) as the intentional infliction of mental and emotional anguish on a spouse.

Financial abuse: Financial exploitation is a method of gaining control over a victim by manipulating their financial resources. This can include, but is not limited to, controlling the family's income and either denying or severely restricting the victim's access to family funds. This could include keeping financial secrets or hidden accounts, putting the victim on an allowance or

giving them no say over how their money is spent, or forcing them to hand over their paycheck to the perpetrator. Getting the victim fired or preventing them from getting hired. By making the victim late for work, refusing to provide transportation to work, or calling/harassing/calling them at work, the abuser can cause the victim to lose their job. Spending money on non-essential items instead of necessities (food, rent, and utilities) (drugs, alcohol, hobbies.)

THE IMPORTANCE OF ETHICS IN HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

Philosophy is divided into several branches, the most important of which are ethics, metaphysics, logic, aesthetics, and epistemology. The phenomenon of domestic violence as a human act falls neatly into the ethical philosophical realm. This is due to the fact that ethics is concerned with how humans should behave in society in order to maintain order and the well-being of all members. Domestic violence is widely practiced and, in some cases, accepted as a normal occurrence, as has been discussed. Domestic violence, on the other hand, poses a threat to society's order and well-being. Violence is a central and major aspect of people's lives from an ethical standpoint. Physical violence is taken into account in particular because it frequently involves a unique painfulness and traumatic quality; it also undermines physical integrity and is frequently overlooked by scholars. Violence and its consequences have been marginalized, ignored, and devalued (Des Gasper, 2004). As a result, there is an ethical need to critically evaluate domestic violence.

Socrates, one of the western civilization's ancient Greek moral philosopher, emphasized the importance of human beings having meaningful lives. "...the unexamined life is not worth living," he believes (Ethel et.al, 1984). It is therefore critical to constantly reflect

on every aspect of our daily lives in order for life to be worthwhile. Political, economic, social, and cultural ways of life are all included. Moral philosophy is also a term used by some scholars to describe ethics as a branch of philosophy. It is "...philosophical reflection on morality, moral issues, and moral judgments" (Brandit, 1979).

Domestic violence is a moral issue that needs to be examined critically. Moral philosophy, according to Raphael, is a philosophical discussion of assumptions about right and wrong, good and bad, as general ideas and as applied in people's private lives. It is a philosophical investigation into norms or values concerning concepts of right and wrong, good and bad. What should be done and what should not. Some marital relationships are characterized by ideas of dominance and subordination that are morally questionable. Another contentious issue that this study attempted to address is whether they should be kept private or made public. Moral philosophy, according to Plato, is an investigation into "...how we ought to live" (Plato, 1987). Men and women, as rational beings, should live in peace and harmony rather than in conflicting relationships. Ethics, as a philosophical study, allows a person to stand on his or her own two feet, "to be self-critical, and to be obligated to choose for oneself." It improves one's rationality, responsibility, and humanity" (Raphael, 1994).

Moral philosophy emerges, according to Socrates, "...when we pass beyond the stage in which we are directed by traditional rules, and even beyond the stage in which these rules have been internalized." We can be said to be inner-directed when we think critically and broadly about ourselves and achieve a sense of autonomy as moral agents." Some African communities regard wife battering as an "acceptable" practice and a means of

disciplining errant wives, based on their traditional thinking or epistemology and socialization. Such culturally acceptable practices, values, and norms, however, should be subjected to critical examination in the Socratic philosophy. All forms of violence, whether perpetrated by men or women, are morally reprehensible because they invariably result in pain and suffering, as well as negative consequences.

The terms "moral" and "ethical" are frequently used interchangeably with "right" or "good" to refer to "morality" as opposed to "non-moral" or "non-ethical" behavior (William, 1973). Moral problems, moral judgments, moral codes, moral arguments, moral consciousness, and moral point of view are discussed in moral philosophy. As a result, the term "ethical" can also be applied in this context. Ethically right is synonymous with "morally good," implying that it refers to "morality" rather than "non-morality" or "non-ethicality." The thesis' use of these terms is no exception. The terms non-moral and amoral are interchangeable. Amoral means "outside the scope of morality: unconcerned with moral judgments," according to the Cambridge Advanced Learners' Dictionary. Non-moral is defined as "independent of moral consideration; neither immoral nor moral" in the same dictionary (William, 1973). This section in summary examines domestic violence to determine whether it is morally right or wrong.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Domestic violence is a serious form of abuse of power in family, trust, or dependency relationships. It infringes on the basic rights of those who are most vulnerable to abuse due to their gender, age, disability, or dependency. It is also defined as a serious social and criminal problem that can lead to victims' death or disability. It can include murder, as well as physical and sexual assault.

Domestic violence against men is prevalent in Nigeria, according to the study, with motives ranging from self-defence to provocation, infidelity, financial hardship, and inebriation. According to this research, men, too, are victims of domestic violence. In other words, domestic violence against men has gone from being a rare occurrence to being a reality, as evidenced by this study. The study looked at the importance of ethics in human relationships and consequently stated that domestic violence is a moral issue that needs to be critically examined and that men and women, as rational beings, should live in peace and harmony rather than in conflicting relationships. The study recommends that professionals such as social workers, psychologists, and counsellors should be included among the court officials who assist the magistrate in elaborating on the type of abuse the victims may be experiencing, and also that more awareness campaigns should be held to raise awareness about the causes, consequences, and where to seek help if you are a victim of domestic violence. The study also recommends that victims form support groups to help domestically abused men cope with the challenges of domestic violence, which can have serious consequences if not addressed professionally.

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