

Family Violence Variables Influencing the Psychosocial Well-Being of Children of Abused Partners in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria

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Abstract: The study examined how family violence variables influence the psychosocial well-being of children in the family of abused partners. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The study sample was 500 randomly drawn from five local government areas of Ibadan metropolis. A self-completed questionnaire tagged: Family Violence and Psychosocial Well-Being of Children's Evaluative Questionnaire (FVPSWBOCEQ) was used to collect the requisite data. The data was analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Chi-Square (χ^2) Statistics. The result showed that there is a significant relationship between Family violence variables such as promiscuity, infidelity and physical assault and psychosocial well-being of children in the family of abused partners. While religion and coercive sex of abused partners have no significant relationship with psychosocial well-being of children in the family. Significant relationships were also revealed between abused partner's marital status and psychosocial well-being of children ($\chi^2 = 17.6$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.05$) and between abused parent's level of education and psychosocial well-being of children ($\chi^2 = 25.7$, $df = 8$, $p < 0.05$). Based on these findings, it is recommended that family counselling services will be very helpful for the families in understanding and coping with problems within family situations.

Key words: Family violence, abused partners/parents, psychosocial well-being and family counselling

INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is the most pervasive yet least recognized human rights abuse in the world. It is also a profound social problem, sapping women's energy, compromising their physical health and eroding their self-esteem. Worldwide, one of the most common forms of violence against women is abuse by their husbands or other intimate male partners. Partner violence occurs in all countries and transcends social, economic, religious and cultural groups. Although, women can also be violent and abuse exists in some same-sex relationships, the vast majority of partner abuse is perpetrated by men against their female partners.

Information on the amount of violence in families shows that it is not a rare phenomenon. Violence, of course, represents a rather extreme example of the failure of supportiveness. It is found in every kind of family and it can reach extreme levels. For example, family fights are one of the most frequent reasons for police calls. In fact, domestic violence is one of the leading causes of death among women and is the most common cause of nonfatal injury (Kyriacou *et al.*, 1999; Lauer and Lauer, 2002).

Family violence may take the form of spouse abuse, child abuse, or abuse of parents (including the abuse of elderly parents by adult children). Abuse of parents is probably less common than the others. For instance, in a survey of 469 university students, Browne and Hamilton (1998) found that 14.5% acknowledged using violent tactics with a mother or father and 3.8% admitted that they were severely violent. According to them, a substantial number of the violent students, also reported being maltreated by their parents in earlier years.

Jaffe *et al.* (1990) and Edelson (1999) observed that, conflict between parents frequently affects their young children. Children who witness marital violence face increased risk for such emotional and behavioural problems as anxiety, depression, poor school performance, low self-esteem disobedience, nightmares and physical health complaints. However, McClosky *et al.* (1995) and Edelson (1999) stressed the point that, such children also are more likely to act aggressively during childhood and adolescence. In the same vein, Spaccerelli *et al.* (1995) and Song *et al.* (1998) further observed that, children who witness violence

between their parents often developed many of the same behavioural and psychological problems as children who are themselves abused.

This study therefore, attempts to examine how family violence variables influence psychosocial well-being of children in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria.

Objectives of the study: The main objective is to examine how family violence variables influence the psychosocial well-being of the children. Other objectives are to examine how the parent's marital status and educational background of the parents affect the psychosocial well-being of the children.

Review of the literature: In Nicaragua, children of battered women were more than twice as likely as other children to suffer from learning, emotional and behavioural problems and almost seven times as likely to be abused themselves, physically and emotionally (Ellsberg *et al.*, 1999). Among abused women in Nicaragua, their children often witness the violence, as did 64% of women in Ireland and 50% in Monterrey, Mexico (O'Conner, 1995).

Studies in US have found that 30 to 60% of families where husbands abuse their wives the children also are abused (Appel and Holden, 1998; Edelson, 1995). Clinical experience also suggests that this pattern exists in the developing world as well (O'Conner, 1995). While children's reactions to violence vary according to their age, sex and the social support that they receive (Jaffe *et al.*, 1990). Thus, violence may undermine child survival as well.

However, child abuse is more likely occur when one of the natural parents is missing. For instance, children in a single-parent, or those with a stepparent, are much more likely to be victims of abuse. By 1997, reports of possible abuse were made on just over 2.7 million children and nearly 900,000 were substantiated as involving some kind of maltreatment or risk of maltreatment such as neglect, physical and sexual abuse and emotional maltreatment (US Bureau of the Census, 1999).

The typical child abuser is a young single-parent who was married for less than ten years and had a child before the age of eighteen. Such child abuser is plagued by money worries, has rightly experienced other stresses (such as divorce or death of a family member, etc) and has few friends or relatives in community (Calhoun, Light and Keller, 1997).

Ammerman *et al.* (1991) and Gells (1995) stressed further that, children who are abused or severely neglected may experience a drop in intelligence and increased risk of depression and suicide. As young

children, they tend to be hyperactive, easily distracted and unpopular with their peers. As adolescents and adults, they are more likely to abuse drugs or alcohol and to become involved in juvenile delinquency and violent crime. They therefore asserted that child abuse can end only when the social conditions that bring it about are alleviated.

A study in Indian States of Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh also found that women who had been beaten were significantly more likely than non-abused women to have had an infant death or pregnancy loss from abortion, miscarriage, or stillbirth. The study controlled for other influences on infant mortality such as mother's education, age and parity (Jeyebhoy, 1998).

While it is unclear exactly how family violence affects child survival, one explanation is that the children of mothers who are abused are more likely to be born underweight, a factor that increases risk of dying during infancy or childhood. Another possible explanation is that mothers with violent partners may have lower self-esteem, less mortality, weaker bargaining power and less access to resources and thus are less able to keep their children healthy. In rural Karnataka, India, a study found that children of mothers who were beaten received less food than other children did, suggesting that these women could not bargain with their husbands on their children's behalf (Ganatra *et al.*, 1998).

In Nigeria, the issues of domestic or family violence among intimate partners may not be unrelated to some cases cited in the literature review. The empirical evidences in Nigeria regarding family violence is not unconnected with marital instability in all ramifications. However, Osiki (1995), Salami and Bakare (1997), Idowu (2000), Esuola (2001) and Adedoyin (2003) in their various studies of marital instability in Nigeria observed that domestic violence and socio-economic status of the partners had influenced marital status of couples in Ibadan Metropolis. They found out that the mother-in-laws have consistently constituted a serious threat to many Nigerian marriages. They argued further that spouses are often bored and terrible interpersonal dissatisfaction abound in marriages where mundane routines of everyday living subsist a way of life, causing stress, fatigue and marital instability.

Nevertheless, most studies on family violence have focused on the patterns, prevalence, causes and preventions. This study therefore, focuses on how some family violence variables influence the psychosocial well-being of children of abused partners in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses: Based on the introduction and review of literature, the following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance to achieve the objectives of this study.

- Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between family violence variables such as promiscuity, infidelity, physical assault, religion and coercive sex and psychosocial well-being of children in the family.
- Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between abused parent's marital status and psychosocial well-being of children in the family.
- Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between abused parent's level of education and psychosocial well-being of children in the family.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design: The study is on family violence variables influencing the psychosocial well-being of children of abused partners in Ibadan metropolis. The descriptive survey design was used to seek the relationship between some family violence variables and the psychosocial well-being of children of abused partners in the study areas.

Participants: The participants in the study were 500 abused partners randomly drawn from five local government areas of Ibadan metropolis-Ibadan North, Ibadan North-west, Ibadan South, Ibadan South-east and Ibadan North-east.

Instrumentation: A questionnaire tagged: Family Violence and Psychosocial Well-Being of Children's Evaluative Questionnaire (FVPSWBOCEQ) was constructed by the researchers. The questionnaire comprises variables of family violence as they affect the children of abused partners in Ibadan metropolis. The items in the questionnaire were structured in such a way that would enable the respondents to pick alternative answers against their choice of responses. The questionnaire includes both the close and open ended questions.

The reliability of instrument was tested using the test-retest reliability coefficient of stability in order to test whether the instrument would provide identical data when administered in the same way. To achieve this, a pilot study or test was carried out using 100 abused partners in two local government areas-Akinyele and Ido local government areas in Oyo State, Nigeria which was not included in the scope of the study. The test-retest paradigm was however, effected after a two week interval.

The correlation of the overall results with the pilot survey exhibited reliability coefficient of 0.85 and 0.87, respectively. This result showed that the questionnaire was reliable as it fell within the identical range.

Procedure: The questionnaire was administered individually through the help and support of the local government council workers in each local government areas (study area). A total of 700 questionnaires were distributed out of which 500 were returned and well administered. This represents a return of 71.4% which is considered adequate, bearing in mind the volatility and sensitivity of the issues under investigation.

Data Analysis: The data collected were collated, edited, coded and processed into computer. The data were also analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Chi-Square (χ^2) Statistics.

RESULTS

The results of the study obtained for testing the three hypotheses are presented in Table 1-3.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between family violence variables such as promiscuity, infidelity, physical assault, religion and coercive sex and psychosocial well-being of children in the family.

Table 1 shows the relationship between family violence variables such as promiscuity, infidelity, physical assault, religious affiliation and coercive sex and psychosocial well-being of children in the family. The table reveals that promiscuity as one of the family violence variables affects psychosocial well-being of children. As regards to this, promiscuity is one of the major determinants of family violence which really affects the psychosocial well-being of children in the family of abused partners, hence, the correlation coefficient of calculated value r (0.248) is greater than the critical r value (0.088) showing that, there is significant relationship at 0.05 level of significance.

The infidelity is also a strong determinant of family violence which affects psychosocial well-being of the children. There is a correlation coefficient of 0.144 (the r calculated value) is greater than critical r value of 0.088.

Moreover, physical assault is another determinant of family violence which affects psychosocial well-being of the children. Thus, there is a correlation coefficient of 0.116 which is greater than critical value of 0.088.

Table 1: Correlation coefficients of family violence variables such as promiscuity, infidelity, physical assault, religion and coercive sex and psychosocial well-being of children in the family

Family violence variables	N	r cal.	r critical	Sig. r	Remark
Promiscuity	500	0.248	0.088	0.000	Sig.
Infidelity	500	0.114	0.088	0.001	Sig.
Physical assault	500	0.116	0.088	0.009	Sig.
Religion	500	0.033	0.088	0.456	ns
Coercive sex	500	0.028	0.088	0.534	ns

Sig. = Significant at $p < 0.05$, ns = not significant at $p > 0.05$

Table 2: Cross-tabulation and chi-square analysis of abused parent's marital status and psychosocial well-being of children in the family

Marital status of abused parents	Respondent's response to psychosocial well-being of children			Total	χ^2 cal	χ^2 critical	df	Sig. level	Remark
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree						
Married	219 (43.8)	36 (7.2)	21 (4.2)	276 (55.2)	17.6	0.711	4	0.05	Sig
Separated	40 (28.0)	21 (4.2)	23 (4.6)	184 (36.8)					
Widowed	16 (3.2)	12 (2.4)	12 (2.4)	40 (8.0)					
Total	375	69	56	500					

$\chi^2 = 17.6$; $df = 4$; $p < 0.05$; Sig. = Significant

Table 3: Cross-tabulation and Chi-square analysis of abused parent's level of education and psychosocial well-being of children in the family

Level of education of abused parents	Respondent's response to psychosocial well-being of children			Total	χ^2 cal	χ^2 critical	df	Sig. level	Remark
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree						
No formal education	22 (4.4)	10 (2.0)	10 (2.0)	42 (8.4)	25.7	2.73	8	0.05	Sig
Primary education	155 (31.0)	21 (4.2)	16 (3.2)	192 (38.4)					
Secondary education	160 (32.0)	12 (2.4)	17 (3.4)	189 (37.8)					
Tertiary education	10 (2.0)	16 (3.2)	11 (2.2)	37 (7.4)					
Other(s)	10 (2.0)	14 (2.8)	16 (3.2)	40 (8.0)					
Total	357	73	70	500					

$\chi^2 = 25.7$; $df = 8$; $p < 0.05$; Sig. = Significant

The religion of abused parents does not have a significant relationship with family violence and does not affect psychosocial well-being of the children hence, the critical r value of 0.088 is greater than r calculated value 0.033.

Lastly, the coercive sex of abused partners is not a determinant of family violence that will affect psychosocial well-being of the family hence, the critical r value of 0.088 is greater than r calculated value 0.028.

Ho₂: There is significant relationship between abused parent's marital status and psychosocial well-being of children in the family.

Table 2 shows cross-tabulation and chi-square analysis of marital status of abused parents. The table shows that, χ^2 calculated value of 17.6 is greater than χ^2 critical value of 0.711 at 4 degree of freedom; the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This indicates that, there is significant relationship between marital status of abused parents and psychosocial well-being of children in the family.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between abused parent's level of education and psychosocial well-being of children in the family.

Table 3 shows the relationship between abused parent's level of education and psychosocial well-being of children in the family. The results obtained from the table show that, the χ^2 calculated value (25.7) is greater than χ^2 critical value (2.73). The null hypothesis is therefore, rejected. This shows that there is relationship between level of education of abused parents and psychosocial well-being of children in the family.

DISCUSSION

It has been noted in this study that, the independent variables such as promiscuity, infidelity, education, physical assault, religion, marital status and coercive sex as well as dependent variable (psychosocial well-being) are all actually manifestation effects of Abused partners.

Table 1 shows the three family violence variables (i.e., promiscuity, infidelity and physical assault) have significant relationship with psychosocial well-being of children in the family. This position confirms Osiki (1995), Esuola (2001) and Adedoyin (2003) findings that domestic violence and socio-economic status of the abused partners have resulted to marital instability in Nigeria. The children that fall within this family setting are more likely to abuse drugs or alcohol and become involved in juvenile delinquency and violent crime.

Not surprisingly religion and coercive sex are significant but have negative relationship with psychosocial well-being of children. This therefore, supports the findings of Breault and Kposowa (1987), Amato and Rogers (1997) that changes in economy, religion and educational system constitute negative relationships with psychosocial well-being of children of abused parents. This finding further support the research findings of Flewelling and Bauman (1990), McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) that, adolescents from abused partners tend to have higher rates of drug use (including alcohol), premarital sexual activities, poor academic performance and higher rates of dropout from school.

The abused partners predisposed to family violence because they learned such behaviours from their parents who often abused by their parents. This was observed by Gelles and Straus (1988), Carlson (1990) that marital abuse is transmitted from generation to another.

Table 2 shows that relationship between marital status of abused parents and psychosocial well-being of children in the family. The finding supports the research findings of Gringlas and Weinraut (1995) that, neglected parents do not physically abuse their children, but they abuse them psychosocially by their lack of feeling and caring. Also, they are emotionally distant from them. For instance, both single-parents and their children face an even broader range of stresses, including feelings of responsibility; task and emotional overload on the part of the parents; and emotional, interpersonal and school problems on the part of the children.

Table 3 shows that relationship between abused parent's level of education and psychosocial well-being of children in the family. The results obtained from the table show that the χ^2 calculated value (25.7) is greater than χ^2 critical value (2.73). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. The abused parents level of education has significant influence on psychosocial well-being of children in the family. However, this finding supports the research findings of McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) that, there is a correlation between parent's academic achievement and psychosocial well-being of children in the family and that children in single-parent homes tend to have lower academic self-concepts.

Implication of the findings: The findings of this study have great implication for intervention measures to reduce family violence among the abused partners or parents. In the course of this study, we found that family violence variables are manifestation effects of abused partners which in turn, make children or adolescents experiencing problems in the family situations. Many factors are also

associated with families who physically abuse children, including economic problems, isolation, children's abilities to meet parental needs for love and attention, alcoholism and drug abuse, lack of education about nonphysical alternatives to discipline, inability to cope well with stress and marital problems.

Individual, marital and family counselling services will be very helpful in regard to families experiencing problems. Additionally, mental health centres, social services agencies, child and family services agencies, child guidance clinics, churches, hospital, schools and youth services programmes often provide various types of counselling services. Unfortunately, in Nigeria services often are available on a limited basis, due to scarce resources and the large number of persons needing services and services may not always be available free or on a sliding scale.

CONCLUSION

Increased attention by helping professionals is being given to family counselling as an effective ways of strengthen individual functioning and address problems. Family counselling is effective in helping families understand behaviour and coping patterns, establish more productive communication patterns, resolve problems and supportive each other as family members. In almost all situations where family member is experiencing a problem or undergoing a stressful change-for example, sustenance abuse, family violence, rape, a serious illness or disability, death of a family member, divorce or remarriage-family counselling can help the entire family reinforce positive changes and address negative patterns appropriately and also serve as a source of support to each other.

However, social workers, because of their emphasis on system/ecological perspective, often played an important role in this shift in focus from individual to family counselling. Social workers in particular focus on the strengths of family members and of the family as a total system, building on those strengths to make the system more supportive of its individual members.

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