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Domestic Violence: A Social Menace to Families' Sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of domestic violence as a social menace to families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State. The study examined the physical and psychological effects of domestic violence to families' stability. Two research questions and two hypotheses were also postulated to guide the study. A survey research design was adopted for the study. A sample size of 50 respondents was obtained from different intimate partners that have once been domestically violated through multi-stage sampling procedure. An adapted structured questionnaire of Domestic Violence against Family Stability, DVFSQ was used for data collection. Data analysis was done using frequency

counts, percentage and t-test analysis at 5% level of significance. Results indicated a significant impact of physical violence ($t=0.02$, $p<0.05$) and psychological violence ($t=0.52$, $p<0.05$). The findings reinforce the reflective consequences of domestic violence to families' sustainability ranging from physical assault to emotional disturbance. Therefore, the understanding of the complex dynamics of domestic violence thereby, highlights the importance of promoting peace and unity for families' sustainability and development that cannot be undermined in addressing violence within families and communities at large.

Keywords: Domestic, Violence, Social, Menace, Physical, Psychological, Family, Sustainability

Introduction

In every society, the family is regarded as the fundamental unit that fosters emotional support, moral guidance, and societal stability. However, this foundation is increasingly under threat from a pervasive and often hidden problem regarded as a domestic violence. Babalola (2020) ^[2] therefore, described domestic violence as any abusive behaviour used by one partner to gain or maintain control over another within an intimate relationship or household. Domestic violence is a social problem that deeply rooted with intimate partners and transcends geographical, economic class and cultural boundaries. According to the UNICEF report, 2016; domestic violence takes various forms and manifestations ranging from physical, emotional, psychological, sexual deprivation and the more. Domestic violence seems to be one of the most recent family persistent problems. Ultimately, domestic violence is more than a private issue; it is a social menace with public consequences (Binuyo, Azorundu, Adeyeye & Adesanya, 2024) ^[3].

The report from United Nations stated that averagely 20-50% of couples worldwide experience domestic abuse or violence at the hands of their intimate partners or family members (Babalola, 2020) ^[2]. It is also added that more than a million cases of intimate partner abuse are recorded annually. Thus, domestic violence is seen as a social menace as it is not only disrupts individual well-being by extension, the broader community. It is often concealed behind closed doors and sometimes, jeopardizes the long-term families' sustainability (Dube and Anda, 2021) ^[5]. The families' sustainability; the foundational units of any society, is currently challenged and threatened by domestic violence. Binuyo, Azorundu, Adeyeye and Adesanya (2024) ^[3] described family sustainability as the ability of families to thrive emotionally, socially, and economically over time. Domestic violence directly threatens families' sustainability by creating a toxic emotional environment, preventing shared decision-making and mutual respect, leading to legal battles, separation, and social stigma and contributing to generational

cycles of abuse and dysfunction (Gagné & Lavoie (2021) ^[8]. Without intervention, the ongoing presence of violence in households weakens the foundation of society itself.

These foundations collapse, where and when domestic violence present and persistence.

The current trend undermines the safety, development, and cohesion of family members, ultimately impacting societal well-being (Binuyo, Azorundu, Adeyeye & Adesanya, 2024) ^[3]. That is, families' sustainability depends on security, trust and emotional stability. Many cultures, societal norms and stigmas seems to be hidden collaborators to this social menace as they are sometimes consciously and unconsciously silence those victims and embolden perpetrators and thereby, reinforcing a toxic cycle. It undermines family sustainability and, with it, the stability of societies. To build a future where families thrive, domestic violence must be confronted with urgency, empathy, and resolve (Emery, 2019) ^[6]. There are factors to be considered in investigating satisfaction in marriage, which their misunderstanding seems to be triggers of domestic violence in a couple's life. However, domestic violence is not bound by a geographical location, social class, race, or even religion affiliation but is a global crisis against marital blissfulness (UNICEF & USAID, 2016) ^[15].

Since, no nation is exempted from domestic violence phenomenon such as; hitting, slapping, throwing objects, pushing, sexual assault, financial deprivation, affection withdrawal and beating of one's intimate partner. Karakurt, Smith and Whiting (2024) reported that, the resultant effects ranging from physical mutilation, psychological problems or sudden death of the victims. The current trend has globally shifted attention more to violence against the wives or female partners. Still, it is now becoming clearer that domestic violence is not restricted to women only but both genders as husband and wife do engage in abusive or violent behavior against each other. According to a Vanguard Newspaper report on 25th August 2016, in Nigeria, several cases of wives hurting husbands verbally, sexually and physically are common in our environs; cases of this nature are rarely reported by men in Nigeria rather they endure it (Cohen & Marrion, 2020). The same newspaper reported a recent Public Opinion poll conducted by NOI Polls Limited in partnership with Project Alert on domestic violence; the results showed an increase in domestic violence across Nigeria in recent times as reported by about 8 in 10 (78 per cent) respondents.

Domestic violence is widespread, deeply rooted and has serious impacts on women and men, even children's health and well-being. Its continued existence is morally indefensible (Ayodele & Ogundele, 2020) ^[1]. Domestic violence has short-term and long-term physical, emotional, psychological, financial, social isolation, including from their own extended family and other effects on women (Karakurt, Smith & Whiting, 2014) ^[10]. Every individual that experiences domestic violence is unique in her or his own way yet, there are many common effects of living with violence and living in fear. Although, the cumulative impact of each act of violence depends on many complex factors. These could be range from the obvious physical effects of domestic violence such as physical injuries, physical health like insomnia, chronic pain, exhaustion, reproductive health problems and even death (World Health Organization, 2000) ^[17].

Yet there are also other effects on that are not necessarily the results of physical injuries such as higher rates of miscarriage, most probably because pregnancy is often a time when violence begins or is exacerbated. This study therefore explored both the physical and psychological effect. According to Western Australian Government (2013) ^[16], those individuals that do experience domestic violence are more likely to experience depression, panic attacks, phobias, anxiety, sleeping disorders, suicide attempts, alcohol and other drugs addicts thereby resulting to using minor tranquillisers and pain killers. According to global a report by the UN in 2019, victims of domestic violence experience some trauma physically such as injuries, sexual or psychological harm, harmful controlling behaviors, and chronic health conditions like arthritis, chronic pain, pelvic pain, ulcer and migraine. Violence against spouses has incalculable costs to present and future generations and it undermines human development (UNICEF & USAID, 2016) ^[15].

More so, it was reported that women who experience domestic and family violence are often unable to act on their own choices because of physical restraint, fear and intimidation (Karakurt, Smith and Whiting, 2014) ^[10]. This implies, they often live in persistent fear of further violation thereby, frequently silenced and unable to express their point of view or experience. The cost to individuals, health systems and society is enormous. Recent global figures indicate that 35% of women worldwide have experienced either domestic violence or partner sexual violence in their lifetime (UNICEF and USAID, 2016) ^[15].

However, on the factors associated with domestic violence, in North-East, Nigeria, especially in Wukari metropolis area of Taraba State, the findings of Okoli, Uzoma, & Musa (2017) ^[12] reported 70% of respondents reported abuse in their family with 92% of the victims being female partners and the remaining 8% being male. The common forms of abuse reported were shouting at a partner (93%), slapping or pushing (77%) and punching and kicking (40%). It is however disturbing to note that many women do not know if they have been abused or not (Babalola, 2020) ^[2]. This could be due to the acceptance of some abusive behavior as 'normal' (Oyediran & Isugo, 2019) ^[13]. Domestic violence remains a pressing issue in Nigeria especially in Wukari, Taraba State, where both women and men that are affected cut across different social class or backgrounds. Hence, this study was an attempt to explore the physical and psychological effect of domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Domestic violence is a social menace that threatens the very core of families' sustainability. Its consequences are far-reaching, affecting individuals, families, and the society at large. Addressing this problem requires a holistic approach that combines legal, social, and psychological strategies. Though, it seems numerous studies have been done on domestic violence but most of which were done in the advanced countries with accurate data unlike ours. Thereby, there seem to be scanty of research works in this area in Nigeria with précised data and, especially in Taraba State based on the researcher knowledge. Thus, gap knowledge in the families' sustainability can then be addressed with suggested solutions to be implemented both in policy

making and in the best practices to best support the affected couples and families as to attain progress and possible solutions to this social menace in our society. It is, therefore, pertinent that this study seeks to answer question in a statement form as to; what are the effects of domestic violence as a social menace to families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State?

Objectives

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of domestic violence as a social menace to families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State. Specifically, the study seeks to determine the:

1. Physical effect of domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State.
2. Social effect of domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State.
3. Economic effect domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State and;
4. Psychological effect of domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State.

Research Questions

Two research questions were posed in line with the purpose of the study to guide the study:

1. What is the physical effect of domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State?
2. What is the economic effect of domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari?
3. What is the social effect of domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari?
4. What is the psychological effect of domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari?

Hypotheses

Two hypotheses was formulated and tested at 5% level of significance as they guided the study.

H0₁ There is no significant difference in the means rating of male and female intimate partners on physical effect of domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State.

H0₂ There is no significant difference in the means rating of

male and female intimate partners on economic effect of domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari Taraba State.

H0₃ There is no significant difference in the means rating of male and female intimate partners on social effect of domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State.

H0₄ There is no significant difference in the means rating of male and female intimate partners on psychological effect of domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari Taraba State.

Method

The study adopted a research survey design. The study was carried out in Wukari Town of Taraba State, North-East Zone of Nigeria. The population comprised 52 intimate partners that have once suffered or experienced domestic violence. (**Source:** Customary and Magistrate Courts, Wukari, Taraba State. Given the relatively small number of respondents, enumeration sampling was employed. The sample size was 52 intimate partners with gender distribution of 77% (38) females and 27% (14) males participated and used for the study. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the study. An adapted questionnaire on domestic violence was restructured, revalidated and used. It was tagged Domestic Violence against Families Sustainability Questionnaire (DVFSQ). A trial testing was done on 12 intimate individuals that were once domestic violated using Cronbach Alpha technique with a reliability index of 0.76. The utilized questionnaire was a four-point Likert scale, distributed and retrieved back at a spot. The data collected was analyzed using frequency counts and percentage to answer the research questions. Thus, the responses were merged into two stands that is; strongly agree and agree (agreed) while disagree and strongly disagree (disagreed) for ease description. The hypotheses were tested using a t-test analysis technique at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Question One: What is the physical effect of domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State?

Table 1: Frequency Counts and Percentage rate of physical effect of domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State

S. No	Items	Frequency		Percentage %		Decision
		SD+D	SA+A	SD+D	SA+A	
1	My partner throwing things at me or do hit me with objects	3	49	6.2	93.8	Agreed
2	My partner always slapping or punching me with his/her fist	10	42	24.9	75.1	Agreed
3	My partner used to kick or drags me around the house/on the floor	6	46	14.7	85.3	Agreed
4	My partner tried to burn me with fire or strangle me	10	42	23.1	867.9	Agreed
5	My partner beats me up till a pregnancy was lost	24	28	56.4	43.6	Disagreed
6	My partner pushed/wounded me with a knife, gun or other weapon	10	42	24.4	75.6	Agreed
7	My partner locking me in or out of the house to limit my movement	10	42	17.7	82.3	Agreed
8	My partner used hunger as a weapon to punish me and my kids	10	42	22.2	77.6	Agreed
9	My partner made me feel un-save with him/her	9	43	18.6	81.4	Agreed

Note: N = 52, SD = Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, SA = Strongly Agree & A=Agree; Any item with rating point < 50% = Disagreed & item with rating point >50% = Agreed.

Table 1 showed the percentage level at which intimate partners who have been once victims of domestic abuse perceived the above items as physical effect of domestic violence against their families' sustainability. All the 9 items showed a sign of positive response (>50%) as agreed except item 5; my partner beats me up till a pregnancy was lost (56.4%) that indicated disagreed. That is it is not all

domestically violated women have experienced miscarriage coming from family physical assault compared to 43.6% of respondents that have had such a case.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the means rating of male and female intimate partners on physical effect of domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State.

Table 2: T-test between the mean rating of male and female intimate partners on physical effect of domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. error	Df	t-cal	p-value
Male	14	2.94	0.39	0.11	25	-2.36	0.027
Female	38	3.24	0.42	0.07			
Total	52	3.16	0.43	-			

SE = Standard Error & $p < 0.05$ = level of significance

Table 2 showed significance level of all the items perceived to be physical effect of domestic violence as a social menace to families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected ($0.027 < 0.05$). This implies that there is a significance differences in the means rating of male and female intimate partners on

physical effect of domestic violence against families' sustainability. Findings indicated that women are more victims of physical assault of domestic violence against their families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State.

Question Two: What is the psychological effect of domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari?

Table 3: Frequency Counts and Percentage rate of psychological effect of domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State

S. No	Items	Frequency		Percentage %		Decision
		SD+D	SA+A	SD+D	SA+A	
1	My partner withholds affective love from me just as a punishment	10	42	15.4	64.6	Agree
2	My partner does not show approval or appreciation on past gesture	5	47	8.8	91.2	Agree
3	My partner did force me to intercourse with me, even when I was in pain	13	39	30.7	69.3	Agree
4	I suffer obsessive jealousy and often accusation of unfaithfulness	8	44	15.5	84.5	Agree
5	My partner irrationally blames me for everything	9	43	16.3	83.7	Agree
6	My partner uses my past flirting knowledge to insult me	9	43	18.6	81.4	Agree
7	My partner threatens to harm me or himself just to punish me	21	31	41.2	59.8	Agree
8	My partner threatens to commit suicide just to make me lonely	13	39	21.7	79.3	Agree
9	My partner gets angry for me talking to other men or women?	3	49	8.4	91.6	Agree
10	My partner tries to limit my contact with my family and friends	7	45	18.2	81.8	Agree
11	My partner always quarrelling me to know my where about	6	46	14.8	75.2	Agree
12	My partner usually not spending free time with me	5	47	8.8	91.2	Agree
13	My partner uses barrenness in our marriage to disgrace or insult me	19	33	31.7	68.3	Agree
14	My partner made me depressed and traumatized emotionally	10	42	22.2	77.8	Agree
15	My partner made me to loss interest in that marriage even at home	10	42	17.7	82.3	Agree

Note: N = 52, SD = Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, SA = Strongly Agree & A=Agree; Any item with rating point < 50% = Disagreed & item with rating point >50% = Agreed.

Table 3 showed the percentage level at which intimate partners who have been once victims of domestic abuse perceived the above items as physical effect of domestic violence against their families' sustainability. All the 15 items showed a sign of positive response (>50%) as agreed That is it is not all domestically violated women have experienced miscarriage coming from family physical

assault compared to 43.6% of respondents that have had such a case.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the means rating of male and female intimate partners on psychological effect of domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari Taraba State.

Table 4: T-test between the mean rating of male and female intimate partners on psychological effect of domestic violence to families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba Stat

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. error	Df	t-cal	p-value
Male	14	3.08	0.32	0.08	36	-0.66	0.52
Female	38	3.16	0.48	0.08			
Total	52	3.13	0.44	-			

SE = Standard Error & $p < 0.05$ = level of significance

Table 4 showed significance level of all the items perceived to be psychological effect of domestic violence as a social menace to families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted ($0.52 > 0.05$). This implies that there no significance differences in the means rating of male and female intimate partners on psychological effect of domestic violence against families' sustainability. It shows there is no gender bias about the effect psychological assault of domestic violence against their families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State as both men and women victims or suffered the consequences psychologically.

Discussions

Table 1 showed the percentage level of those intimate partners, which were once victims of domestic abuse physically against their families' sustainability. The findings indicated that 8 items out of 9 items are positively agreed above 50%. That is, the physical effect of domestic violence is obvious evident against their families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State. Table 2 also showed positive significance level ($0.027 < 0.05$) of all physical effect of domestic violence against families' sustainability. This study showed that women are more victims of physical assault of domestic violence against their families' sustainability that make it truly a social menace. This is in line with the findings of Koenen (2018) ^[11] indicated that 64.4% of married and 50.4% of unmarried women expressed consent for wife beating. Similarly, findings of Ayodele and Ogundele (2020) ^[1], further highlighted that brutal attack on women by intimate partners is in different forms such as slapping, acid, hot or cold water bath, rape, beatings, injuries that sometimes result to sudden death of the victim. The result also shows a consistency with the findings of Heise and Fulu (2021) ^[9] that physical violence has serious impact on the families' wellbeing. Many of those victims do not report their cases to the appropriate quarters for fear of reprisal from abusers or the belief that the police and the judicial system could not help. To Okoli, Uzoma, and Musa (2017) ^[12], some women described giving in to their partner's advances as a bid to avoid physical violent consequences of the past experience thereby living in perpetual fear, isolation, and silence. Thus, children raised in such environments are more likely to experience emotional and behavioural problems or may carry the scars into adulthood.

Table 3 showed the percentage level of those intimate partners, which were once victims of domestic abuse psychologically against their families' sustainability. The findings indicated that all 15 items are positively agreed above 50%. That is, the psychological effect of domestic violence is a serious attack against their families' sustainability in Wukari, Taraba State. Table 4 also showed positive significance level ($0.52 > 0.05$) as the hypothesis was accepted because psychological effect of domestic violence in this study is not gender bias either in favour of female or male. This study showed that a significant relationship exist between psychological violence to families' sustainability. Thus, the study of Gagné and Lavoie (2021) ^[8] found that psychological violence could lead to mental health problems such as emotional disruption, depression and anxiety, decreased in work productivity. More so, Sabina and Sullivan (2020), consented that psychological violence lead to physical health problems such as chronic pain and

emotional trauma. Study of Finn and Foshee (2021) ^[7], found that psychological violence often lead to high rates in divorce, which can have significant negative impacts to families' sustainability.

Limitations of the Study

During the course of this study, the researcher encountered several constraints that impacted the data collection and analysis processes. Chief among these constraints was financial limitations, which hindered the acquisition of necessary data and the logistical movement between various locations. Additionally, the reluctance of respondents to complete questionnaires posed a significant challenge, affecting the overall response rate and the comprehensiveness of the data gathered.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study in addressing domestic violence, a multifaceted approach is required, thus the following recommendations are suggested:

Education and Awareness: Teaching about healthy relationships and gender equality in schools and communities is crucial.

Strong Legal Systems: Effective laws and enforcement mechanisms should protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable.

Support Services: Shelters, hotlines, mental health care, and financial assistance can provide essential aid for survivors.

Community Involvement: Community leaders, religious institutions, and NGOs must play an active role in prevention and response.

Rehabilitation Programs: Perpetrators must be offered counseling and behavioural-change programs to stop the cycle of abuse.

Conclusion

Domestic violence is a social menace that threatens the very core of family sustainability. Its consequences are far-reaching, affecting individuals, families, and the society at large. In addressing this problem, a holistic approach that combines legal, social, and psychological strategies is required. And could be done through fostering safe, respectful, and supportive home environments can families thrive and contribute to a healthier, more resilient society. Domestic violence therefore, out of its many forms through this study made its cardinal point in unravel physical and psychological impacts on families' sustainability being a profound threat to the fabric of society. At its core, it disrupts the most fundamental unit of social life: the family.

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