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“MY WIFE RIPS MY CLOTHES, HITS ME, AND LOCKS ME IN A ROOM”: CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF MALE VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN IBADAN

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ABSTRACT

As the statistical spotlight exposes the endangerment of the female gender due to domestic violence, it has simultaneously signaled a threat that is steadily bedeviling the male gender. Therefore, this study investigated the challenges and coping strategies of male victims in Ibadan using the Gender Symmetry Theory to guide explanation of the phenomenon. After collecting and analyzing data through the qualitative method, it was discovered that various challenges were encountered by male victims of domestic violence, which included verbal and physical assault, spousal infidelity, and sexual deprivation amongst others. There was the use of formal and informal coping mechanisms such as taking legal steps, alcohol abuse, and anti-social behaviours amongst others by victims to survive the incessant domestic victimization from spouse. The study, however, recommended increased education and awareness against domestic violence while well-equipped and functional support systems be provided to cater for the needs of male victims of domestic violence.

Keywords: Domestic violence, victimization, male victims, female perpetrators, Gender Symmetry Theory

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence (DV) is an alarming and seemingly never-ending phenomenon in existence in different parts of the world. Occurring in the home, DV wreaks havoc among family members, encompassing various types of abuse: physical, emotional, or financial. Factors triggering DV may include stress or anxiety, power plays, and personal complications. The effects on DV victims may last for years, with consequences for their minds, emotions, and body. (Scott-Storey et al., 2022; Aborisade 2023; Ogunyemi & Aborisade 2023; Tshoane, Olutola, Bello, & Mofokeng, 2024). Domestic violence is an affront to civilization, according to the UN, the WHO, UNICEF, and the African Union. The organizations join their resources towards maximizing the medical, social, psychological, and physical effects of dealing with this problem. But somehow this issue seems to be hardening with time. (Bacchus, et.al, 2024).

Domestic violence-related crimes were traditionally associated with men, with women being the victims (Tshoane et.al., 2024). However, a number of studies, crime statistics, media outlets, and civil society organizations have brought attention to women in recent times, highlighting the disparities in the number of domestic violence crimes that they commit (Kolbe & Büttner, 2020;

Mshweshwe, 2020; Bijlsma, et al., 2022; Aborisade, 2023; Ogunyemi & Aborisade, 2023). According to 2018 statistics in Germany, over 114,393 women and 26,362 men experienced Domestic-based violence (Kolbe & Büttner, 2020). A merged crime statistics in Mecklenburg–Western Pomerania, indicated that in 2018, 4317 persons were victims of domestic violence with 3978 in the previous year (Kolbe & Büttner, 2020; Wörmann, Wilmes, Seifert, & Anders, 2021). More than 25% of Nigerian men, according to Ogunyemi and Aborisade (2023), suffer abuse in their intimate relationships. The most prevalent forms of domestic violence against men (DVAM) include financial hardship, physical and emotional abuse, financial deprivation, food starvation, arguments, disrespect from wives, and sexual abuse amongst others (Obarisiagbon, 2017; Tshoane, Olutola, Bello, & Mofokeng, 2024). Meanwhile, these statistics are a reflection of reported cases only.

Domestic violence, being a cross-cutting concept concerning class, religion, or socioeconomic status, finds its patterns shaped by location, more so in urban settings. With overpopulation, poverty, and evolving gender dynamics constituting the key urban stressors, Ibadan, an important Nigerian city, has come to bear those putatively interrelated stresses leading to domestic violence. Being considered a center of culture as well as one of Nigeria's commercial capitals, it serves as a veritable laboratory for testing and understanding how urbanization, religious intensity, and unequal socio-economic level provide strains into domestic life (Fawole et al., 2021; Arisukwu et al., 2021; Adebayo & Kolawole, 2023). The city also gives a clear picture of the national-level changes in gender roles and the gaps in institutional response. Thus, Ibadan becomes an excellent, context-specific lens for grasping some very fundamental causes of violence and for exploring interventions that recognize location issues (Aidonojie et al., 2022; Ogunlana & Alabi, 2024).

Recent studies suggest a growing frequency of domestic violence in Nigeria, with males and females becoming victims who stigmatize themselves, and those sufferings are further aggravated by their neighborhoods (Nmadu et al., 2022; Bolarinwa et al., 2022). Whereas cities like Lagos, Port Harcourt, and Kano have attracted scholarly attention on domestic violence due to their urban density and social complexity (Okorie & Lawal, 2021; Ibrahim & Musa, 2023), Ibadan has remained critically under-researched, despite frequent media reporting of severe DV cases, including intimate partner homicides (John et al., 2022; Adejimi et al., 2022). A major cultural and economic center, Ibadan exhibits wider Nigerian urban problems poverty, religious pluralism, and gradual nature of change in gender roles as an ideal setting for geographically grounded studies on DV (Aidonojie et al., 2022; Arisukwu et al., 2021; Ogunlana & Alabi, 2024). While most Nigerian cities have hitherto been explored for DV, Ibadan, with its unique mixture of tradition and transition, might provide avenues for unearthing localized determinants of DV and thereby inform interventions of more contextual and regionally appropriate nature (Fawole et al., 2021; John et al., 2022).

This paper contributes to filling a pivotal gap in the emerging knowledge on DV in Ibadan by focusing on male victims a group which is usually neglected in discussions on domestic violence (Adejimi et al., 2022; Yalley & Olutayo, 2020). In doing so, it challenges the notion that domestic violence mainly affects women, asserting that male victims survive their experience through various coping strategies (Fagbamigbe et al., 2020; Oyediran, 2021). In Ibadan, domestic violence is shaped by cultural silence and stigma as well as weak institutional response; therefore, such a crime condition demands targeted intervention. Serious cases are often reported at the media level; however, localized research has suffered some lack of attention (Osazuwa, 2023; John et al., 2022). Over 30% of women report that they have been victims of intimate partner violence, yet perhaps in the majority of cases, under pressure from religion and families, they do not report or seek help (Fawole et al., 2021). The ineffectual enforcement of the VAPP Act further

exacerbates this gulf (Ike & Jidong, 2023). Thus, a targeted study on DV would be in dire need in Ibadan, given its exclusivity in the socio-legal area.

Men often suffer greatly from physical aggression in their homes, which manifests as violent behaviors directed at them as a result of their partner's general inability to control their anger, financial hardship, childlessness, peer pressure, suspicions of infidelity, and spiritual issues (Bates, 2020; Alsawalqa, 2021;). However, these previously described factors are specific to both genders and account for domestic violence against both men and women (Hine et al., 2021; Kgatle et al., 2021; Aborisade 2023; Ogunyemi & Aborisade 2023).

Clearly from literature, there are different contextual grounds staggering the issues of GBV in Nigeria, and the patterns of this occurrence is peculiar to specific genders. However, as the statistical spotlight exposes the endangerment of the female gender due to the phenomenon in question, it has simultaneously signaled a threat that is steadily bedeviling the male gender (Obegi et al., 2017; Thobejane & Luthada, 2019; Tshoane, Olutola, Bello, & Mofokeng, 2024). Despite the statistically rising number of victimized males through domestic violence, it is understood that marginal exploration, attention, and intervention are given to the male victims of this form of violence in society (McLeod, Ozturk, Butler-King, & Peek, 2024). Therefore, this paper explored the challenges and coping strategies of male victims in Ibadan as a means of providing insight into the mitigating know-how of tackling the preexisting and steadily increasing problem of violence against the male gender.

Gender Symmetry Theory

The Gender Symmetry Theory, developed by scholars such as Murray A. Straus (1999, 2005) and Richard B. Felson (1996, 2002), refutes the conventional view that domestic violence is characterized predominantly by male offenders. Instead, it holds that intimate partner violence (IPV) is symmetric, such that both males and females can both act in a role of victim and offender. Straus, through his conflict tactics scale (CTS), provided empirical information proving that both men and women use domestic violence at similar frequencies, even though its forms and consequences can differ. Felson developed this basis by arguing that IPV can and should be considered a form of general aggression and not a gendered issue alone.

The theory is underpinned by a number of key presumptions. It holds that domestic violence is not one-way, with both parties in a union capable of violent behavior. Motives for such behavior vary in terms of gender; whereas feminist schools of thought believe male violence stems from patriarchy and a quest for control, the gender symmetry theory holds that female-inflicted violence can occur in a quest for self-protection, vengeance, or in a state of heightened emotionality. Another key presumption is that male victimization is grossly underreported due to shame, social norms, and fear of mockery. Victims of IPV who are male often face social and judicial biases, in that most interventions and protective interventions have been designed for female victims. Consequently, many male victims have access to restricted forms of supportive interventions, undermining their capacity to access care, seek help, and break free from abusive unions.

The study aligns closely with GST by shedding light on the overlooked experiences of male victims of domestic violence. It challenges the widely held belief that IPV primarily affects women and reveals how societal norms in Ibadan discourage men from acknowledging their victimization. Male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria often struggle with societal disbelief and ridicule, making it difficult for them to come forward. Many resort to silence or avoidance strategies, choosing to endure the abuse rather than face public embarrassment. Others adopt passive resistance or gradually withdraw from their relationships to escape the violence. Since formal legal and psychological support structures rarely cater to men, many victims turn to informal support networks, such as friends, family, or religious institutions. Applying GST to this study highlights the urgent need for gender-inclusive domestic violence interventions in Nigeria. Recognizing that both men and women can be victims fosters a more balanced approach to IPV

research and policy development. This study underscores the necessity of legal reforms, social awareness campaigns, and support systems that acknowledge male victimization, ultimately contributing to a more equitable framework for addressing domestic violence (Kimmel, M. S. 2002; Fanslow, Mellar, Gulliver, & McIntosh, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

This study was designed to cross-sectionally explore the phenomenon as data were collected using in-depth interviews (IDI) and key informant interviews (KII). Data for this article was derived from 25 interview participants. Thirteen (13) Victims and four (4) perpetrators formed the set of perpetrators included in the In-depth interview while 4 officers of the Nigerian Police Force and four (4) Court officials were included in the KII exercise Snowballing and purposive sampling technique were harnessed to successfully investigate the phenomenon.

This study was conducted in Ibadan metropolis, Oyo state, in the southwestern axis of Nigeria. Ibadan being known for its thriving hub of rich cultural heritage, well-populated and heterogeneous setting that umbrellas people of various ethnic representations, sociocultural and economic background, offered the unique opportunity to examine the phenomenon of domestic violence coupled with the activities of the criminal justice actors and sister agencies to mitigate the numerous cases of domestic violence perpetrated against men in Ibadan metropolis (Ojo & Adebayo, 2021). Furthermore, the study comprised of male victims and female perpetrators of domestic violence who are currently married or divorced, personnel of the Nigerian Police Force and officials of the family court in the Ibadan metropolis who were selected strategically due to their expertise on the phenomenon (Adekunle & Salami, 2023).

The result showed that domestic violence is prevalent among Middle-aged with 73% within the age category between thirty years through to age 50. Likewise, findings revealed that 68% participants were still living together and were legally wed as at the point the research was carried out. Furthermore, findings revealed that victims' report of domestic abuse incidents are determined by their degree of education. Due to their position, 94% participants with high levels of education might prefer not to speak out about domestic abuse. The results, which also included information on the intimate partner marriage patterns, showed that 18% of the participants' cohabitated as spouses while 9% are polygamous and 73% of the participants are monogamous. This suggests that most of the victims only had one wife. The outcome also revealed the socioeconomic standing of the spouses. Results showed that whereas most intimate relationships 32% have low socioeconomic status between them, 32% have high socioeconomic status and 45% have the same socioeconomic status as their partners. This suggests that among the intimate partners included in this group, problems with financial incapacity would become the norm. This study revealed that majority of the participants is monogamous. . This suggests that people who live in polygamous marriages are less likely to experience domestic violence because they can pick a partner who will bring them peace, as opposed to people who live in monogamous marriages, where intimate partners still share a bong and are more likely to experience domestic violence repeatedly if it is not addressed. This suggests that research will compile thorough data on the origins, effects, and occurrences of domestic violence between intimate partners.

Utilizing the snowballing technique, the attention of the IDI participants was gained and trust was established in order to facilitate the data collection process. Adoption of snowballing technique was possible through the aid of informants, family and friends related to victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, while the KII participants were reached via purposive sampling technique. Participants responded to structured interview questions on domestic violence; those interviews were tape-recorded and were subjected to audio transcription where verbatim quotations were extracted from, for the manual content analysis using the narrative technique of reporting and

ethnographic summaries. To further improve the robustness of the finding's interpretations leading to this paper, all response categories were contrasted and combined in order to spool out and/or provide a clear picture of the unique themes. The study was conducted in Ibadan North Local government.

RESULTS

The results emanating from this study were presented and discussed in this section. Sub-themes were developed to sufficiently capture the different forms of challenges faced by males in the domestic setting and coping strategies adopted by victims of domestic violence in Ibadan metropolis, Oyo State.

Challenges Faced by Male Victims of Domestic Violence

To generate insight into the challenges faced by men in the domestic setting, participants revealed diverse and common forms of challenges male victims experience from their female counterparts, some of which had physical, sexual, and psychological impacts on the victims. One major challenge identified was the use of physical assault/torture by female perpetrators. In this study, physical violence is described as furiously gripping a man by his clothing, striking him with objects, ripping off his clothes, or purposely giving their partners food poisoning to harm them. According to a participant, the use of physical combat against the husband happens due to a fall in income or the failure of the man to meet financial responsibilities, leading to household frustrations. As a result, women may adopt physical assault measures, including ripping off the man's clothing or holding his clothe by the collar to inflict pain through partial strangulation as a form of coercion to demand financial remittance. Moreover, verbal abuse often precedes such physical altercations, creating a toxic environment where communication deteriorates into hostility. As reflected in the statement of a victim:

My wife rips my clothes, hits me, and locks me in a room. She complains that I don't give her enough money to eat, and she is aware that I always give her extra when I have it. Sometimes I put 1000 naira or more on the table for her food, but when I'm broke, if I put 500 naira on the table for her, I'm in trouble. (Victim/ male/ UI/ IDI/46 year)

A participant who had experienced the same physical assault revealed that:

She traveled from Ibadan to abuse me in public when I was working in Ogbomosho. While I have been victimized in many other times, which was the first and worst of all of them. (Victim/ male /Agbowo/IDI/40 years).

Another participant explained that:

It is not that I am not working but I felt the man is meant to be responsible for the provision of the family. Because as I was working, I was supportive but he didn't do anything. So sometimes I lock his collar, and this battle causes his cloth to rip.when he attempts to beat me, I overpower him.(Perpetuator/female/Agbowo/IDI/ 37years)

Similarly, another participant provided additional insight into what actually happens and leads to physical violence. She explained that while her intention was never to beat her husband, the man's neglect of his responsibilities resulted in cloth locking, and the husband's acts of self-defense were always met with her victory. The participant disclosed that:

I never intend to beat my husband, but when he refuses to do his duties as a husband, I lock him up and won't let him go for work until he appeases me. But he always attempts to fight back to free himself from my control, so he is the one who challenges me and I will win. (Perpetrator / female/ Olodo/IDII 30years).

This view was corroborated by a key informant that:

Unlike the man, who has a slender build, the woman is physically imposing, both in size and height. This significant body size advantage allows her to exert physical dominance over him. When her expectations are unmet, she resorts to physical violence. During one incident, the man reported to us with visible cuts inflicted by the woman and brought along several torn clothes as evidence, each ripped on different occasions. (Police officer/ male/ KII/ 42 years/ Iyaganku).

Another big issue for men at home is verbal abuse, and it can cause long-term hurt feelings. This form of abuse employs insulting and hurtful language to attack a man's dignity and self-esteem. According to studies, verbal abuse impacts men by creating a hostile environment in which their worth is questioned at all times. In Nigeria's patriarchal society, men have to shoulder most of the financial and leadership roles in the family. In case they fall short, they can face teasing and wrath from fellow men. Most respondents in the study, who completed secondary school and earned a National Diploma, discussed how they were susceptible to verbal abuse for not living up to society's and marriage's expectations. A participant revealed that a man suffers verbal abuse:

A Man was going through financial crises at a point with a huge debt as a bank manager so the wife started nagging. So, one day he confronted the wife and instead of her to explain she started shouting on the husband and hauling insults on him. When they were at our office then she referred to him each time as idiot. (Police officer/male/KII/ 46 years/Iyaganku).

The participant further affirmed that:

The woman maltreated and abused the husband which made the husband depressed and unable to do anything. He was the one that built the school for her, got her a car and built a house for her but she took everything for granted. The man wept in our office and said he will take back the school from her and we had to force the woman to kneel and beg her husband while we all joined her too. (Court Official/Magistrate/KII/ 52years)

In a similar line, research showed that a lady had spoken poorly about her husband, which sparked a heated argument that ultimately resulted in the husband's death. One key informant attested to the fact that:

This happened long time ago, many times the woman will speak against the husband anyhow without any reason. At some point she complained of monetary issues and in retaliation of the husband to respond this would then lead to a physical tussle between partners. They will both pick up anything seen around to fight and at the end it led to the husband's death using a TV decoder to hit him (Police officer/female/KII/ 42 years/Eleyele)

According to the study's findings, infidelity by any party jeopardizes family stability. However, in this context, the results showed that infidelity by a female partner is sometimes seen as a challenge for males, therefore males become victims of domestic violence through infidelity from their spouses. The issue of infidelity is established by both the victims and perpetrators in this study.

A participant revealed that:

A man confronted my wife following a quarrel, and in the conversation, I discovered that he was her past lover, with whom she had an affair. She initially gave him a car but retracted it and sold it when they quarreled and broke apart. That fact became apparent because she continued insulting him, even when they shared a past together. (Victim/ male /Agbowo/IDI/39 years).

The findings revealed that infidelity was committed in order to make ends meet for the family because the husband is incapable of providing adequately for the family. One participant revealed that:

I've informed him repeatedly that the funds he provides are inadequate. He would not listen, so he could not stop me from using my body to generate income or even ask me to repent. (Perpetuator/female/Amoloko/IDI/ 30years)

A Participant revealed that:

This woman wasn't remorse at all when we asked about what really happen between her and her husband. The husband caught her on their matrimonial bed and came to report to us. When we questioned her, she said he wouldn't satisfy the home financially and she is not even ready to beg him. (Police officer/female/KII/ 42 years/Eleyele)

Asides infidelity, deprivation of sex was probed and this study demonstrated that sexual deprivation which means rejection from sexual advances or deliberate removal of sexual intercourse as a means of punishment for one's partner, was adopted by women hence becoming a challenge faced by men in the domestic setting. It was discovered that sexual deprivation was used by women to torture men in situation where they believe the man has defaulted.

A victim expressed himself that:

There was a time I didn't have sex with my wife for about 4-5 months and It's not that I don't want to, but my wife would deny me. So many times, like that, she would not answer me because I did not give money for food or give one excuse. So yes denying me of sex means you are being violent to me. (Victim/ male /Ringroad/IDI/36 years).

A participant established that:

The woman will ignore the husband and be chatting with a man around 9 O'clock in the night till 2am. The husband will be begging her for sex but she will refuse (Court Official/Magistrate III/KII/ 45years).

Findings revealed that a man's wife denied him sex because she had extramarital affairs. A participant had this to say:

I didn't intentionally act badly toward my spouse by forbidding him from having sex. As an Igbo man he is, he was raised to believe that if a wife had an extramarital affair outside of the home and slept with her husband, he would die. Prior to that, I was constantly communicating with this estranged man on social media. I didn't even have time to cook for or have sex with my husband. (Perpetrator/female/33 years/IDI/Mokola).

These remarks suggest that one form of domestic violence is sexual deprivation among domestic partners. Women intentionally deprive their spouses of sexual intercourse as a means of punishment while men see this as a form of domestic challenge.

Coping Strategies adopted by Male Victims of domestic violence

Research demonstrates that a high proportion of males indulge in a range of psychological, self-abusive, and harmful behaviors, such as substance abuse, mood disorder, anger expression, and suicide attempts, in reaction to feelings of shame and guilt. In addition, studies have shown that men perceive violence perpetrated by female intimate partners as a challenge to masculine identity, and therefore, domestic violence is a source of shame for such males. In view of such observations, a study of male victims of domestic violence and their coping strategies has revealed that males use a variety of techniques to mitigate the intensity of the abuse or mitigate its consequences. In dealing with such hardships, participant employs avoidance strategies. One of the participants asserts that:

She constantly threatens me. I simply leave the house for her whenever she behaves in that manner. In an effort to be kind to her, I even kneel down. In fact, there was one occasion when I borrowed about 5,000 naira from her to purchase our child's dress and promised to return it to her; however, I did not do so on the day I had promised. (Victim/ male /Jericho/IDI/55 years).

Similarly, a participant affirmed that, he just leaves the home for her and sometimes even prostrate for her to please be kind to him

She threatens me with just everything. Whenever she does that, I just leave the home for her. I even prostrate for her to please be kind to me. (Victim/ male /Agbowo/IDI/40 years).

A spiritual approach was employed. A key informant corroborates that:

Some leave the house, some don't return, and some disregard the wife's prepared meals. When the wife takes up the matter with us, the victims then begin to discuss what the wife did recently or sometimes. (Court Official/Margistrate/KII/ 52years)

Furthermore, as a means of coping with the situation, it was discovered that men result to harmful/dangerous strategy such as substance abuse and alcoholism. A victim identified that due to persistent troubles he resorted into taking excessive alcoholic drink and staying late outside due to his nagging wife.

He affirmed that:

But in my life, I have never drank before, but the persistent trouble made me almost died, I stay late, drink to forget my worries, so when I just come back home at night, she would have gone to sleep, and in the next morning, I would have gone early, put her allowance on the table, leave before she wakes up (Victim/ male /Agbowo/IDI/40 years).

Akey informant further noted that:

The woman may come to us to complain about the husband's lack of financial support for the family's needs after the wife has done anything to warrant the husband's reaction. Since they don't know how else to handle the situation, some guys choose to smoke or drink in order to release their emotions or thoughts. (Court Official/Magistrate/KII/ 39 years)

Findings further revealed that despite the fact that women don't like men who can't handle their home, involving family members could take two-side of a coin before their spouse. It was

discovered that the male victims sometimes manage domestic violence by involving family members against his intimate partner.

A participant mentioned that:

The man didn't manage the issue well. There are some issues when they occur there's no need for you to involve your family and you have to manage yourself but the husband wasn't man enough. He kept calm and didn't raise his hands on the woman. He just called his wife's parent and his own parents. The helped them settle but it didn't last long before they divorced. (Court Official/Magistrate/KII/ 52years)

The above statement attests to the fact that family as an external but formal institution is an effective tool and platform for helping male victims of domestic violence cope with pressure from their female partners. The idea of summoning the family for rescue is frowned at by women because they believe it depicts inability to handle a family as a man.

Another way through which the menace of domestic violence is arrested by male victims is the use of the religious institution. According to the IDI and KII participants, religion is very resourceful in mitigating situations relating to family and domestic violence and religious leaders have influence sufficient enough to appease both parties. This is expressed by a participant that said:

I pray a lot and I always ask God to help me manage my family because I know I have married a problem. Sometimes her mind would be calm and sometimes it seems as if the prayers didn't work so I begin to think. (Victim/ male /Olodo/IDI/49 years).

A key informant explained that:

If everyone holds up his or her religion in high esteem everything will be fine, and leaving everything to God. Such persons will be prevented from doing what's not expected of them. (Court Official/Magistrate/KII/ 42years)

Another informant corroborated that:

Some pastors are trying their best to save homes and some pastors pretend to help the couples having issues, ask them to fast and ask the wife to come for counselling and they successfully resolve the issue. This has happened times without number. **(Police officer/female/KII/ 46 years/Iyaganku)**

This study established that separation is another means for men to survive the tides of violence against them. Majority of the participants agreed that it may be better for the individuals involved to separate rather than continue in a harmful situation. The sentiment conveyed is that marriage should not be considered an obligation at all costs, especially when it compromises one's safety and well-being. This view is perfectly expressed through this key informant that said

Once we discover that the issue is big and can't be solved; might escalate later it is better they go their separate ways. Marriage is not a do or die affair. The victims are willing to provide evidences but will not like to use it. Just like the last case the man showed us the picture on his phone but didn't want to give us (Court Official/Magistrate/KII/ 52years)

DISCUSSION

The first objective of this article reveals the challenges faced by male victims of domestic violence. According to the study's results, physical aggression towards a spouse includes holding him up

by his clothing, hitting him with objects, tearing his clothes, inflicting body bruises, and other forms of physical aggression. Similar to this, Munusamy, (2022) affirms that there is the presence of aggression behavior in romantic relationship which is commonly referred to as domestic violence or intimate partner violence. One of the participants also explained during the investigation that the physical attack was a kind of self-defense, which ultimately caused the guys to get bruises. In keeping with Babcook's findings from 2003, women who engage in domestic violence do it as a means of self-defense against any unwanted advances from their husbands. Similar to this, a study in Kenya, using 231 men as a case study, found that 6 out of 10 males had been subjected to inflicted bodily harm, expressed in beatings, hitting, or beating by their spouse; 5 out of 10 males had been subjected to both physical harm and verbal abuse by their spouse (KNCRC, 2014; Gitonga, 2021).

Findings from the study also discovered that verbal abuse is a form of violence faced by men domestically. As previous studies have established that 4 out of 10 males had been verbally abused by their spouse (KNCRC, 2014; Gitonga, 2021). This occurs when women use harsh, insulative, and derogatory words on men, and this affects such men emotionally. Sometimes, some words trigger quarrels in the house, and these verbally induced quarrels can lead to grievous situations such as injuries or untimely death. It further revealed that women could become less satisfied and uncommitted in a marriage and/or relationship, hence they use verbal abuse to express their dissatisfaction. This finding corroborates that of Tshoane, Olutola, Bello, & Mofokeng, (2024) that Women involved in domestic violence are verbally abusive to their male counterpart. They spend insults on their male partners and by extension to their parents. According to the study's findings, infidelity by any party jeopardizes family stability. However, in this context, the results showed that infidelity by a female partner is sometimes seen as a challenge for males, therefore males become victims of domestic violence through infidelity from their spouses.

The study revealed that cheating is a form of severe domestic abuse perpetrated against men, utilized for controlling them and taking vengeance. Women sometimes cheat in order to survive, particularly when they received less financial support from their husbands. Women who experienced being overlooked and not having intimate contact in marriage sought companionship in affairs in an attempt to satisfy such needs. The same conclusion can be seen in work conducted by Messripour, Etemadi, Ahmadi, and Jazayeri (2016), in which cheating in women is categorized into three: marriage, interpersonal, and sexual motives. According to the study, cheating can occur out of anger and hatred towards a spouse. Despite ongoing controversy regarding whose gender cheats most, studies reveal that cheating occurs at a similar level for both males and females (Mark, Janssen, & Milhausen, 2011).

Furthermore, findings suggest that one form of domestic violence is sexual deprivation among domestic partners. Women intentionally deprive their spouses of sexual intercourse as a means of punishment while men see this as a form of domestic challenge. This corroborates the opinion of Obarisiagbon, (2017) that women's justifications and denials of their partners' sexual satisfaction are subtle but hurtful abuses for males. Obarisiagbon, (2017) further asserts that While women restrict their spouses' access to sexual intimacy, one may argue that this kind of abuse is the most difficult to expose. Also, Tshoane, Olutola, Bello, & Mofokeng, (2024) asserts that women frequently use sexual denial as a negotiating tactic, to make demands, or to obtain favors from their male partners. Men in such relationships face traumatizing situations (Kumar, 2012).

The second objective of this article reveals coping strategies adopted by male victims of domestic violence. The study revealed that men further avoid domestic violence by leaving home, refusing to eat and silent treatment are some measures adopted by men to manage domestic violence. This result agrees with Adebayo (2014) that established that other coping mechanism adopted

are ignoring and refusal of food cook by female Intimate partner. This strategy is an informal means of coping with the crises because no standard, ethical guide or constitutional agency is involved in the process but it saves the situation from escalating in the moment and gives room for peace while taming anger and emotional outburst from perpetrators. Also, this approach is an internal approach as it involves the effort of both parties and no third party.

Consequently, Findings further revealed that drugs, excessive intake of alcoholic, smoking and other forms of substance abuse are tactical measures adopted by men in order to sink their emotions and live above the persistent trouble and violence experienced at home. This result is consistent with Muşat et.al., (2024) literature which Conversely established that men are more likely to exhibit and seek external help such as antidepressants and alcohol abuse when experiencing anxiety and domestic pressure (Muşat et.al., 2024). This measure is an informal and external approach to mitigating the crisis of domestic violence. In addition to previous studies on factors responsible for substance abuse, findings establish that domestic violence can push an individual into drug abuse, alcoholism and other dangerous anti-social behaviours.

Using the Gender Symmetry Theory (GST), findings revealed that men and women are equally capable of perpetrating and being victims of intimate partner violence (Straus, 1999; Felson, 2002). Contrary to frequent practices that understand domestic violence in terms of mostly male violence, the study depicts the two-way nature of intimate relationship abuse—i.e., with male victims. In line with Straus' (2005) use of the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), respondents of this research reported physical aggression from their female partners, e.g., being hit with objects, bruised, and physically restrained. This is backed by past studies that documented women employing violence as a self-defense or emotional measure (Babcock et al., 2003). Even a single male respondent indicated the abuse to have been rationalized by his partner on the grounds of self-defense, illustrating the complex underlying reasons for female aggression described in GST. Again, as predicted by GST regarding men's tendency to suffer in silence due to social disapproval, participants opted for non-assertive coping behaviors such as avoidance, silent treatment, or leaving the home. This accords with Straus' (1999) argument that male victimization is not reported because of fear of shame and disbelief. The Ibadan cultural setting makes this likely; male victims stand to be ridiculed or incredulous and thus might endure abuse in secret so as not to compromise public reputation. Verbal abuse also came out strongly as a common form of psychological violence from the research. These include the use of abusive and insulting language, which study respondents referred to as emotionally hurtful. Tshoane et al. (2024) further found that women perpetrators of IPV tended to use verbal abuse in exercising control or dissatisfaction. Under GST, this once again breaks the stereotype of male perpetrators by illustrating that women can be aggressors not only through physical actions. In sexual deprivation, it was found that women sometimes willfully withheld sex as punishment, control, or bargaining type of abuse difficult to uncover but emotionally harmful (Obarisiagbon, 2017).

Gender Symmetry Theory explains such behavior by recognizing the emotional and relational rather than simply male dominance or patriarchy accounts of female-perpetrated abuse. This study also identifies infidelity by female partners as emotional abuse for controlling or revenge purposes. It aligns with the perspective of Messripour et al. (2016), who categorize cheating in women into marriage-based, interpersonal, and sexual motives. GST is consistent with this differentiation in that it asserts motives may be diverse by gender but both males and females are capable of engaging in acts that lead to relationship instability and damage. Under coping, participants noted using substance use (drugs, alcohol, smoking) as external coping mechanisms for emotional avoidance. This is consistent with Muşat et al.'s (2024) study which shows male victims of domestic pressure have more maladaptive coping mechanisms since they receive no official support. GST explains this as resulting from societal neglect of male victimization where interventions have long been skewed towards women and male victims left to self-medicate.

Conclusion

This paper sheds light on the multifaceted challenges faced by men in domestic settings, where they are often victims of physical, sexual, verbal, and psychological violence perpetrated by their female partners. These challenges not only affect their physical and mental well-being but also undermine the stability of the family unit. One significant challenge identified is the use of physical assault as a means of control and punishment, often triggered by financial strain or disagreements on issues. Verbal abuse further exacerbates the psychological toll on male victims, casting doubt on their integrity and dignity. Additionally, sexual deprivation is employed as a form of punishment, adding another layer of distress for men in these situations.

In response to these challenges, male victims employ various coping strategies, ranging from harmful behaviors like substance abuse and alcoholism to seeking support from family members, religious institutions, and the judicial system. While some coping strategies could provide momentary solace, others like enlisting the help of family members or pursuing legal action—strive to address the underlying causes of the violence and offer long-lasting remedies. The involvement of religious leaders and the judicial system highlights the importance of external support structures in mitigating domestic violence and facilitating resolution. However, it's important to understand that no two people's experiences are the same therefore efforts to address domestic violence against men must be comprehensive, addressing the underlying issues of uneven power dynamics, gender norms, and societal attitudes towards violence in relationships.

The GST asserts that IPV is not unidirectional, affecting both men and women. This study's findings in Ibadan confirm GST by revealing male victims face physical, verbal, emotional, and sexual abuse. Physical aggression includes being struck, locked up, or clothes torn, aligning with Straus' Conflict Tactics Scale. Verbal abuse undermines male victims' dignity, reinforcing societal reluctance to acknowledge their victimization. Sexual deprivation was used by female partners as a form of control, echoing GST's claim that IPV tactics are not gender-exclusive. Coping strategies included avoidance, substance abuse, family involvement, and religious mediation, highlighting societal neglect of male victims. Stigma and institutional biases prevent men from seeking help, reinforcing underreporting. This study underscores the need for gender-inclusive IPV interventions and legal reforms. Recognizing IPV as a gender-neutral issue ensures balanced policies and better victim support. Gender Symmetry Theory provides a crucial framework for understanding and addressing these dynamics.

Finally, the study emphasizes how critical it is to raise awareness of domestic violence against males and to provide more resources for assistance and intervention. Relationships and families can become safer, healthier, and more equal by acknowledging and resolving the issues male victims encounter.

Recommendation

The results of this study accentuate the immediate urgency for timely intervention in an attempt to protect male victims of domestic abuse. There is a need for specially designed emergency hotlines for men, allowing them to seek intervention at the first sign of abuse. Victims should be encouraged to report their ordeal to confidantes, family, and even therapists, in an attempt to break the covertness that tends to surround male victimization. Nevertheless, deep-rooted social factors underlie male victimization and contribute to its expression in a big way. Patriarchal frameworks and traditional gender constructs present unreasonable expectations for males, preventing them from opening up about vulnerability. The expectation that males must maintain a state of constant virility and

independence creates significant obstacles for male victims, who stand in fear of criticism and derision. In addition, cultural values and customs work towards strengthening such a label by portraying domestic abuse in terms of a predominantly feminine problem, therefore denying males an effective support system.

To counter such iniquitous values, society must heighten awareness and information about domestic abuse, with a view to including male victims in such discourses and interventions. There is a need for well-funded and efficient victim care centers offering social, psychological, and legal intervention specifically designed for males. Rebuilding oneself following abuse takes a long period and involves constant intervention, and victims must not suffer in shame but encouraged to seek expert intervention at will.

The formation of a society that promotes security for everyone requires tearing down systemic barriers that result in victimization of men. Domestic violence is a widespread problem, and its presence erodes social cohesion; therefore, it is important for governments to enact effective interventions. These interventions must include educational programs, intervention programs, community supportive structures, and strong legal frameworks for dealing with the continuum of abuse, preventing criminal behavior, holding offenders accountable, and providing an environment in which any individual, regardless of gender, can access care and support.

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