

## INCIDENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG MARRIED WOMEN IN YEWA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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**ABSTRACT:** *The aim of this study was to investigate the social determinants of domestic violence in rural areas as a yardstick for determining the pathways through which socio-cultural processes influence women's susceptibility to marriage. A cross sectional research design was adopted for this study and quantitative data were collected using the Severity of Violence Against Women Scale (SAVAWS) that was developed by Marshall (1992). Domestic abuse was discovered to be prevalently experienced in rural areas. Also, the study discovered six factors that influence the experience of domestic abuse among rural women namely: drunkenness, financial demand, rebuffed sexual advances, annoyance nature of the male partner, cultural and stereotypical beliefs of the communities as well as a combination of any of these factors. It needs to be emphasized that among these six factors, financial request was mostly pointed out as the reason domestic violence occur in rural areas, which is an indication that rural men commonly experience financial stress. This may be due to the high rate of illiteracy and unemployment among rural women as well as the extended family relationship that exist in rural communities.*

**KEYWORDS:** Incidence, Domestic Violence, Married Women, Social Determinants, Rural Area

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### INTRODUCTION

The fact that domestic violence has grown alarmingly to the extent that the socioeconomic growth of our society is being threatened globally has been observed by scholars. For instance, Godiya and Bala (2010) noted that domestic violence had attracted much attention within the past three decades. According to them, though it (domestic violence) has always been there, but the enormity of its prevalence has reached a disturbing degree. In the same way, Holt and Devany (2015) concluded that whilst domestic violence is not a new phenomenon, the past thirty years have seen increasing public awareness and a growing political consensus that something needs to be done.

Siemienuk, Krentz, Gish and Gill (2010) defined domestic violence as a pattern of abusive behaviours used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner in any relationship such as marriage, dating, family and cohabitation. According to the Department of Health, Social Services and the Department of Justice (2013), domestic violence is threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial, or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation) by a current or former intimate partner or family member. Alabi and Oni (2017) emphasized that domestic violence includes any behaviour that manipulate, intimidate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone.

Domestic violence can happen to anyone irrespective of age, race, sex, religion, or gender (Siemienuk, Krentz, Gish & Gill, 2010) but most often, women and children are the victims of such violence as it is common in male dominated cultures such as patriarchal and patrilineal cultures (Kanchiputu & Meale, 2016). For instance, Tjaden and Thoennes (2002) find that in the United States of America, women experience about 4.8 million intimate partner-related physical assaults and rapes. 56% of Indian women experience beating due to bad cook, disrespectful to in-laws, giving birth to more girls, going out without informing the husband, and so on (Basu & Pratishtan, 2002); 60% of women in Senegal are subjected to physical violence from their partners (IRIN, 2007); and in Nigeria, two-thirds of women are believed to have experienced physical, sexual, and psychological violence perpetrated primarily by their husbands, partners, and fathers while girls are often forced into early marriage and risk being punished if they attempt to escape from their husbands (Amnesty International, 2007). These societies are predominantly patriarchal where women are regarded as subordinates and in this manner, subject to husband's control.

### **Effects of Domestic Violence on Children**

Domestic violence also affects children. For instance, studies have shown that such abuse results to lower reading levels for adolescents (Thompson & Whimper, 2010); lower scores on standardized tests for children ages 6 to 17 – in particular, for girls and children younger than 12 years old (Peek-Asa et al., 2007); poor school attendance and lower academic achievement on average (Jayasinghe, Jayawardena & Perera, 2009); dropping out of school or failing a school year (Duvand, Schvaiber, Franca & Barros, 2011); lower performance in regular academic tasks such as reading, quality of work, and math (Bourdillion, Levison, Myers & White, 2010). Alibi and Oni (2017) also find that exposure of children to domestic violence may affect their performance in school such that they lag behind in class as well as in life. This is because being the first point of contact and foundation for the child, whatever happens at home significantly affects the behavioural and psychological upbringing of the child (Meltzer, 2009) just as it has developmental consequences such as cognitive ability, school readiness, academic achievement and emotional adjustment for children (Fantuzzo, Tighe & Childs, 2000).

Domestic violence has negative consequences for children (Assad, Friedman-Sanchez & Levison, 2017); projects poor child nutrition (Heaton & Forste, 2008); has negative effects on children's intellectual (Huth-Bocks, Levendosky & Semel, 2001); emotional, social and behavioural development (Evans, Davies & DiLillu, 2008); and negative psychological, social, and academic attainment (Kitzmana, Gaylord, Holt & Kenny, 2003). According to Akpan and Usoroh (2005), the occurrence of domestic violence has profound and destructive consequences that ranges from physical, emotional and financial effects on the inhabitants of the home be it the women, children or men. In their study, Moffitt and Caspi (2003) observed that children whose parents fought one another are at the risk of abuse three to nine times higher than other children. By implication, living in an emotionally charged and violent homes has negative outcomes for children's responsive and mental health in both the immediate and longer term (Stanley, 2011; Wolfe, Crooks, Lee, Melntyre-Smith & Jaffe, 2003) as some children may 'externalize' their feelings and confusion through aggressive or antisocial behaviour, while others may 'internalize' the behaviours reflecting increased levels of depression, anxiety, and traumatic symptoms (Devaney, 2015).

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN, 2014) claim that children who are exposed to domestic violence are more likely than other children to show signs of behavioural

and emotional depression (such as anxiety, higher levels of anger and disobedience, fear and withdrawal, poor peer sibling, low self esteem); cognitive and attitudinal problems (that is, difficulties with concentration and task completion in school, lack of conflict resolution skills, lower marks on assessment of verbal, motor, and cognitive skills, possess limited problem-solving skills, and demonstrate pro-violence attitudes); long-term problems (for example, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, smoking, and several other risk factors that are common causes of death).

Children that witness domestic violence are between 2.9 and 4.4 times more likely to experience neglect, physical and sexual from a caregiver than those children that are not exposed to such occurrence (Radford et al., 2011); may suffer abandonment, transfer aggression from either of the parent, and may have difficulties in building and maintaining relationships and impulsiveness (Taibat & Oni, 2017).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Hamm (2000) finds that like in other parts of the world, women in Africa suffer domestic violence irrespective of age, class, religion, or social status. Globally, at least one out of three women is beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused during her life time, and most often, the abuser is a member of her own family (WHO, 2004). This is because it is socially acceptable for men to discipline their spouse, especially in patriarchal societies (Daily Trust, 2013). In other words, in most African societies including Nigeria, domestic violence is culturally acceptable and where it is condemned, women are often blamed for provoking men to engage in it (Odimegwu, 2001).

In Nigeria, domestic violence is a serious problem that transcends social, geographical, and ethnic divide (Linosi, Slopen, Subramanian, Berkman & Kawachi, 2013) as significant proportions of women are physically and sexually abused (Yusuff, Arulogun, Oladepo & Olowokeere, 2011; Oyediran & Cumingham, 2014) and this really endangers their health and well-being (Solanke, 2014).

In a study that was conducted in the eastern part of Nigeria, Okemgbo, Omideyi and Odimegwu (2002) found that three-fifths of women experienced battering during pregnancy while one in five reported having been forced to have sexual intercourse. The Centre for Law Enforcement Education Foundation (2013) reports that one in every three respondents of their study in Nigeria admitted to being a victim of domestic violence and that this has been on the increase in the past three years from 21% in 2011 to 30%. A similar study that was carried out by Aihie (2009) reveals that rape, sexual insult and assault, brutalization and victimization, domestic violence on girls and women have been on the increase in Nigeria with victims ashamed to report such incidences to the appropriate agencies for justice. According to Aihie, 50% and two-thirds of Nigerian women are subjected to domestic violence. Worse still, he finds that 65% or more educated women are also in this horrible situation.

An investigation that was performed by Project Alert in 2001 (cited in Aihie, 2009) among women in universities, secondary schools, and markets in Lagos, Nigeria reveals that 64.4% of the 45 women working in the schools and 56.6% of the 48 market women claimed to have experienced domestic violence from their male partner. In a related study that was conducted in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria, Obi and Ozumba (2007) reported that 70% of their respondents had experienced domestic abuse from members of their family. The Centre for Disease Control in Nigeria (CDC, 2006) identified three risk factors for domestic violence: (a)

use of drugs or alcohol; (b) witnessing or being a victim of violence as a child; and (c) not having a job (especially, male partner). In the same way, Catalano, Lind, Rosenblatt and Novaco (2003) discovered that rise in unemployment increases the incidence of domestic violence. This is because the unemployed feels frustrated, angry, and then gets provoked quickly. Also, Obi and Ozumba (2007) noted that difference in socioeconomic status (for example, finance, education etc) between couple can promote domestic violence, especially if the disparity is in favour of the female.

### **Objectives of the Study**

As stated earlier, domestic violence is noted to be a worrying problem that transcends social, geographical, and ethnic divide, however, most studies that pertain to its incidence focus on urban and elitist populace. But such findings may not be transmittable to rural groupings due to their socioeconomic differences. Hence, this study investigates the socioeconomic determinants of domestic violence in rural areas as a yardstick for determining the paths through which socio-cultural processes influence women's susceptibility in marriage. Purposely, this study will:

- i. Investigate the form of domestic violence among women dwelling in rural areas
- ii. Explore the factors that determine domestic violence in rural areas
- iii. Establish whether there are differences in domestic violence experience among rural women

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts the cross sectional research design, which entails investigating people that are similar in certain characteristics but different on key feature of interest such as age, income level, level of education, and so on. This kind of design can be used to verify the characteristics that exist in a community and it allows numerous factors (such as age, gender, income, locality, experience, and so on) to be considered simultaneously.

#### **Participants**

This study was conducted in the Yewa (formerly, Egbado) South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. It is a Local Government Area (LGA) in the Senatorial West of Ogun State and its headquarter is located in Ilaro. The LGA has ten (10) geo-political wards namely: Ilaro I, Ilaro II, Ilaro III, Iwoye, Idogo, Owode I, Owode II, Ilobi/Erinja, Oke-Odan, and Ajilete. Natives of the LGA speak Yewa and Egun dialects, which are subcultures of the predominant Yoruba language. The inhabitants of the LGA are mainly farmers and traders while a few of them engage in craftsmanship. The LGA was chosen because the researcher resides there, which makes it easier for data to be collected.

In order to ensure that women from the ten (10) wards were represented in the study, multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted for the study. In the first stage, five (5) wards that were considered to be typically rural in nature were chosen. The second stage involved random selection of eighty five (85) respondents from each community, making a total of four hundred and twenty five (425).

## Instrument

Quantitative data were collected for this study using the Severity of Violence Against Women Scale (SAVAWS). The scale was developed by Linda Marshall (1992) to measure the incidence and severity of physical aggression against women by their spouses. According to Marshall, the scale is a 46-item questionnaire that was designed to determine: (a) threats of physical violence (e.g. threw or smashed an object), mild violence (e.g. made bullying gestures), moderate violence (e.g. threaten to destroy an object), and serious violence (e.g. threatened with a weapon); (b) actual violence which describes mild violence (e.g. pushed or shoved), minor violence (e.g. twisted arm), moderate violence (e.g. hit with an object), and serious violence (e.g. assault or injure); and (c) sexual violence dimension (e.g. abused sexually). The items of the scale were designed in Likert's 4-point response format that indicate how often the abuse occurred (1= never, 2= once, 3= 2-3 times, and 4= 4 or more times). The maximum score on the instrument for threats of abuse or psychological abuse is 76 and for physical violence is 108 while the minimum is 19 for psychological abuse and 27 for physical violence. Peltzer and Pengpid (2013) had used the scale in their study of the severity of violence against women by intimate partners and associations with perpetrator alcohol and drug use in the Vhembe district, South Africa where it yielded the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.97. For the present study, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.92 was obtained.

## Data Analysis

Table 1 below shows the age distribution of the respondents, which ranged from 15 years to 74 years with mean age of 36 (SD= 10.4). The largest group in the study that experience abuse from their spouse (as shown in the table) were those within 36 and 45 years.

**Table 1: Age Distribution of the Respondents**

Age Interval	Respondents
15-24	16 (5.33%)
25-34	93 (31.0%)
35-44	122 (40.67%)
45-54	50 (16.67%)
≥ 55	19 (6.33%)
Total	300 (100%)

Table 2 reveals that out of the 425 respondents that were interviewed in the study, three hundred (80%) of them claimed to have experienced domestic violence in one way or the other from their spouse, which is an indication that domestic violence is rampant among rural dwellers.

**Table 2: Abused Respondents by Age Distribution**

Age Interval	Respondents
15-24	28 (9.33%)
25-34	97 (32.33%)
35-44	105 (35.0%)
45-54	48 (16.0%)
≥ 55	22 (7.34%)
Total	300 (100%)

Their experience ranged from mild (such as neglect, being insulted in the presence of other people) to serious one (such as beating, pulling hair, and forcible sexual intercourse).

**Table 3: Distribution of the Respondents by their Academic Qualification**

Level of Education	Respondents
None	26 (8.67%)
Primary	108 (36.0%)
Secondary	97 (32.33%)
Tertiary	69 (23.0%)
Total	300 (100%)

Table 3 reveals that women who had only primary education were the most violated. 108(36%) of them claimed that they had experienced abuse from their male partners. This is followed by the respondents that had secondary school education. This means that there is a correlation between academic attainment and domestic violence.

**Table 4: Factors Contributing to Domestic Violence**

Factor(s)	Respondents
Drunkenness	43 (14.33%)
Financial Demand	103 (34.31%)
Sexual Advances	34 (11.33%)
Annoyance	38 (12.70%)
Cultural Factors	34 (11.33%)
Combined Factors	48 (16.0%)
Total	300 (100%)

A number of factors were identified by respondents in this study as contributing to the incidence of domestic abuse. As confirmed in Table 4, 43 (14.33%) women attributed its occurrence to drunkenness; 103 (34.31%) of them claimed it was due to financial demand; 34 (11.33%) suggested that it was because of rebuffed sexual advances; 38 (12.70%) of the respondents blamed their abuse on the annoyance nature of their husbands; 34 (11.33%) of them pointed at cultural and stereotypical beliefs; while 48 (16.0%) of the women asserted that combination of these factors are responsible for domestic violence.

## CONCLUSION

An important finding of this study is that domestic violence is prevalently experienced by rural women as 80% of the women that were engaged in the study claimed having being abused by their spouses. This agrees with the previous studies that have observed that domestic violence is a global problem and that it transcends social, geographical and ethnic divide (Odimegwu, 2001; WHO, 2004; and Linosi, Slopen, Subramanian, Berkman & Kawachi, 2013). The study also uncovers the factors that contribute to such experience in rural areas namely: drunkenness, financial demand, snubbed sexual advances, annoyance, and cultural factors. But it must be noted that among these contributing factors, larger percentage of the respondents (34.31%) pointed to financial request as the reason why their spouses usually insult or maltreat them.

This implies that the financial stress placed on men by their wives is much, which most time results to disagreement between husbands and wives. The financial burden may be compounded with the high rate of illiteracy and unemployment among the rural women.

In consideration of the above findings, it is recommended that government, policy makers, and religious organizations should embark on enlightenment programs, economic empowerment, provision of basic education, especially for girls/women, as well as advocacy programs for victims of domestic violence.

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