



Social Implications of Wife Battering: Need for Counseling Services

KEYWORDS

Psycho-social, wife battering, Counseling services, Family, Frustration and Devastation

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ABSTRACT Most often women are robbed of enjoying certain fundamental human rights due to certain socio-cultural structures inimical to their existence. Wife battering being one of such structures has the tendency of limiting women's potentials in developmental efforts. This paper therefore, sought to find out the opinion of the married couples on the causes of wife battering in Igbo land as well as the implications of wife battering in our social environment. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and was carried out in the south-Eastern zone of Nigeria. A sample of 200 respondents stratified into 100 males and 100 females from the two states sampled were used for the study. A four point scale structured questionnaire arranged in three clusters was used for data collection. Cluster A deals with biographic data of the respondents, Cluster B has 19 items while cluster C has 13 items. The response mode was Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree weighted 4,3,2,1, respectively. Data was analyzed using Mean scores to answer the two research questions. Based on findings of the study, the following conclusion and recommendations among others were made: there is need for the institutionalization of counseling services as part of the welfare department in the local governments in all the states of the federation, to counsel married couples on harmonious marital relationship for a healthy and peaceful home environment. Women organizations and NGO's should be more committed in creating marital relationship awareness among the female-folk, encouraging them to get education which will not only enhance their social status but also enable them to escape from wife battering that impinge on their fundamental human rights and forge ahead.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Battering which is sometimes referred to as domestic violence has become a global issue. It is a common phenomenon that occurs in almost all the countries of the world. The word battering according to Ezeilo (2008:820) is unlawful application enforced on another person resulting in "harmful or offensive contact". For Hornby (1995), it is the criminal act of treating somebody violently. The above definitions are quite in consonance with view of the researchers who consider battering as a wicked way of applying force on someone with a view of afflicting that person's physical and emotional status. Wife battering can therefore be described as brutal attacks on women's physical and emotional well being.

Wife battering is an existential issue. Existentialism as popularized by Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1955), Albert Camus (1913-1960); Martin Heidegger (1889-1955); and Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980) is a philosophical credendum which recognizes and asserts human existence, human dignity, freedom and integrity. It frowns and questions why man should be alienated, debased, denatured, or de-anthologized by cultural, political, social or any intellectual systems. Based on their existential theses, wife battering is a negation and antithetical to the dignity of humankind. It severs the inter-gender relationship between man and woman, which is necessary for social cohesion in the world of freedom and human existence. Besides, wife battering touches the being of womanhood and frustrates the actualization of the essence of such woman's existence which is embedded on bearing and raising children, living happily with her husband, and performing her other social functions with the support of her husband. The occurrence of battering suggests a rift and severed relationship between the husband and wife. To this end

the woman cannot as a single individual actualize her dreams and purpose. In the same development, victims of wife battering, out of frustration and devastation easily give in to depression, anxiety and psychological imbalance, which are the major factors responsible for high mortality rate among women especially during child birth.

When people are depressed according to Ellah (1999), they may feel inferior and this can make them project their cause of depression on some one else. The person who is always the victim is the one (wife) very close to the batterer (the husband).

Corroborating the above view, Badru (2004) maintains that wife battering is considered a gender-based abuse and is a subset of domestic violence which encompasses all acts of violence against women within the context of family. In another contribution, Advani (2012) stated that wife battering or domestic violence has some stereotypic background or beliefs that the family is a private place where men have legitimate rights including the right to discipline their wives; women are irrational, naggy and provokes men and when they deviate from their feminine roles of mother and wife, they deserve to be disciplined.

Nigeria, as far back as 1979 has been a signatory to the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which in its Article 5(a) requires signatories from all member states to take all appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices. The United Nations (UN) through CEDAW equally aimed at eliminating customary and all other

practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority and superiority of either sex or the stereotyped roles of men and women. It is shocking to realize that despite this involvement, the situation in Nigeria with regards to wife battering persists.

The widespread incidences of wife battering in Africa have been associated with its social and cultural acceptance as a means of physical chastisement of women. It goes with the belief that husbands have the right to discipline their wives. This is based on the assumption that at marriage a woman automatically becomes the man's property. Jejeebhoy, (1998) was of the view that husbands deserve the right to correct an erring wife, but this sometimes results to battering. This implies that many cultures condone physical chastisement of women as a husband's marital prerogative (Badru, 2004).

Wife battering has sociological and psychological impact on the family and the society at large. A woman that is constantly battered hardly plays her role effectively. If a woman who is very close to the children is badly battered, by implication the social and emotional life of her children might be affected negatively. Describing this ugly situation as it affects child upbringing, Ellah, (1999:145) succinctly states as follows:

A woman that is deprived of the care and comfort of home and allowed to exhaust her strength through anxiety will not play her role as a mother. The early training needed by children, the formation of habits during early years of infancy will be marred by her own unlovely temper and this will not augur well for the children's academic progress. The implication of the above statement is that when the children's destiny, is marred, invariably the destiny of the larger society may be in danger.

To avert this situation, Fagan, Paltersan and Rector (2002) reported that a former American President Senge Bush initiated a reform law to strengthen marriages. This reform involved married people being taken through counseling programs which gave them relationship and marriage skills training especially for low income couples. The approach yielded a 52% increase in the number of couples classified as most satisfied with their relationship while more than half of the remaining respondents improved their relationships. Fagan et al concluded that marriage education, training and counseling programs strengthened marriage as they helped to reduce strife, improve communication, increase parenting skills and stability and enhance marital happiness.

These results are in consonance with the concept of marriage Counselling which according to Okorodudu (2010), is a process of providing psychological intervention for fostering marital or conjugal relationship in the society. In an earlier contribution, Nwoye (1991) defined marriage Counselling service as a process of helping couples discover the problems in their marital relationships and learn the missing interpersonal relationship skills necessary to enrich and improve the emotional situations in their lives. These reports endorse the importance of marriage counseling services in alleviating marital problems.

Based on the fore-going the study aimed at finding out from

married people, the reasons for wife batter, the implications of wife battering and suggest ways of ameliorating wife battering through counseling services.

The findings of this study, if made available to Nigerian families through workshops and seminars will be of great value to them in the sense that it will help married couples to re-assess their marital relationships and try as much as possible to avoid certain negative cultural values that does not make for peaceful home environment as well as avoid certain provocative acts that can lead to battering. On the part of the government, it will help to enhance policy position on CEDAW.

1.2 Research Question: The following research questions guided the study

1. What are the causes of wife battering in Igbo Land?
2. What are the social implications of wife battering in Igbo Land?

2.1 METHOD:

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study which was carried out in the South Eastern zone of Nigeria. The population for the study comprised of all the married couples in the five states of the Zone namely, Anambra, Abia, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states. The rationale for this selection is because South East Zone is the Igbo speaking area of Nigeria.

Two states were randomly sampled out of the five states in the South-East zone. The sample comprised fifty (50) men and (50) women purposively sampled from each of the two states, totaling 200 respondents. Questionnaire on wife battering was designed on a four point scale of SA- strongly agree- 4 points, A- agree- 3points, D-disagree-2 points and SD- strongly disagree- 1 point and used to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire was made up of two sections, 'A' and 'B', Section 'A', sought information on the personal data of the respondents, Section 'B' consisting of 19 items that answer the research question one was designed for the males while section C consisting of 13 items that answer research question two was designed for only female respondents. The rationale for this arrangement was on the bases that men who batter their wives were in a better position to identify the reasons for taking such action. On the other hand, women who are victims of such acts are equally in a better position to identify the psychological and emotional implications of battering on them. The instrument was face validated by two lecturers in the Department of Social Science Education and Educational Foundations all in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

The researchers used four research assistants who helped in the distribution and collection of the instrument. Mean scores were used to analyze the data collected. A mean of 2.50 and above is the bench mark for acceptance value. This means that, items with a mean of 2.50 and above is accepted as factors while any item with a mean of 2.49 and below is not accepted.

3.1 Results

Answer to the research questions were presented in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Mean perceptions of men on the causes of wife battering in Igbo land.

| S/N | Item | Anambra | | | | | | Ebonyi | | | | | |
|-----|---|---------|----|----|----|----------------|-----|--------|----|----|----|----------------|-----|
| | | SA | A | D | SD | X ₁ | DEC | SA | A | D | SD | X ₂ | DEC |
| | Causes of Wife battering include: | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. | Inability to satisfy the husband's sexual desire | 12 | 10 | 18 | 10 | 2.48 | D | 18 | 20 | 06 | 06 | 3.00 | A |
| 2. | Disobedience to the husband's instructions or rules | 06 | 28 | 02 | 12 | 2.48 | D | 16 | 15 | 16 | 03 | 2.88 | A |
| 3. | Constant nagging by the wife | 08 | 22 | 20 | 00 | 2.76 | A | 28 | 01 | 01 | 20 | 2.74 | A |
| 4. | Frustration on the part of the husband. | 06 | 24 | 20 | 00 | 2.72 | A | 20 | 20 | 06 | 04 | 3.12 | A |
| 5. | Wife's inability to cook choice food for the husband. | 00 | 20 | 22 | 08 | 2.24 | D | 15 | 18 | 08 | 09 | 2.78 | A |
| 6. | Dishonesty on the part of the woman | 10 | 31 | 3 | 06 | 2.90 | A | 10 | 16 | 12 | 12 | 2.48 | D |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|---|----|----|----|----|------|---|----|----|----|----|------|---|
| 7. | Depression on the part of the man. | 00 | 45 | 5 | 00 | 2.90 | A | 21 | 20 | 08 | 01 | 3.22 | A |
| 8. | Drunkenness on the part of the man | 04 | 20 | 4 | 22 | 2.12 | D | 20 | 21 | 03 | 06 | 3.10 | A |
| 9. | Infidelity on the part of the woman | 05 | 35 | 4 | 06 | 2.78 | A | 22 | 09 | 09 | 10 | 2.86 | A |
| 10. | Inability to take care of the children. | 15 | 22 | 9 | 04 | 2.96 | A | 10 | 21 | 13 | 06 | 2.70 | A |
| 11. | Unemployment and poverty on the part of the man. | 03 | 22 | 21 | 04 | 2.48 | D | 23 | 11 | 13 | 03 | 2.68 | A |
| 12. | Deprivation of husband's desires and needs. | 07 | 32 | 01 | 10 | 2.72 | A | 12 | 22 | 09 | 07 | 2.78 | A |
| 13. | Unnecessary requests by the wife. | 21 | 16 | 05 | 08 | 2.84 | A | 22 | 20 | 05 | 03 | 3.22 | A |
| 14. | Excessive demands by the wife. | 16 | 25 | 05 | 04 | 3.06 | A | 22 | 11 | 06 | 11 | 2.88 | A |
| 15. | Fear of insecurity as a result of woman's infidelity. | 21 | 14 | 12 | 03 | 3.06 | A | 10 | 26 | 12 | 02 | 2.88 | A |
| 16. | Feeling of inferiority complex on the part of the man | 02 | 12 | 18 | 18 | 1.96 | D | 11 | 21 | 12 | 06 | 2.74 | A |
| 17. | Frivolous spending on the part of the wife. | 00 | 25 | 25 | 00 | 2.50 | A | 14 | 26 | 6 | 04 | 3.00 | A |
| 18. | Uncleanliness on the part of the wife. | 04 | 21 | 16 | 09 | 2.40 | D | 03 | 10 | 21 | 10 | 2.00 | A |
| 19. | Illiteracy on the part of the wife. | 00 | 5 | 38 | 07 | 1.96 | D | 04 | 18 | 18 | 10 | 2.32 | D |
| Grand X | | | | | | 2.53 | A | | | | | 2.81 | A |

The findings from table 1, revealed that the item mean scores of men in Anambra State on the causes of wife battering are: 2.48, 2.48, 2.76, 2.72, 2.24, 2.90, 2.12, 2.78, 2.96, 2.48, 2.72, 2.84, 3.06, 3.06, 1.96, 2.50, 2.40, and 1.96 respectively. On the other hand, the mean scores of the respondents in Eb-

onyi state are: 3.00, 2.88, 2.74, 3.12, 2.78, 2.48, 3.22, 3.10, 2.86, 2.70, 2.68, 2.78, 3.32, 2.88, 2.74, 3.00, 2.00, and 2.32 respectively. The total mean scores of the respondents in the two states are: 2.53 and 2.81 respectively.

Table 2: Mean Perceptions of Women on the Social Implication of Wife Battering

| S/N | Item | Anambra | | | | | | Ebonyi | | | | | |
|---------|---|---------|----|----|----|----------------|-----|--------|----|----|----|----------------|-----|
| | | SA | A | D | SD | X ₁ | DEC | SA | A | D | SD | X ₂ | DEC |
| | Implications of wife battering are: | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. | Wife withdrawing from social gathering. | 10 | 15 | 12 | 13 | 2.44 | D | 20 | 12 | 18 | 0 | 3.04 | A |
| 2. | Low self image on the part of the woman | 16 | 32 | 02 | 00 | 3.28 | A | 19 | 21 | 06 | 4 | 3.10 | A |
| 3. | Less communication with the husband | 21 | 19 | 04 | 06 | 3.10 | A | 20 | 16 | 14 | 0 | 3.12 | A |
| 4. | Fear of staying in the house with the husband | 12 | 23 | 05 | 05 | 2.64 | A | 10 | 32 | 8 | 0 | 3.04 | A |
| 5. | Poor relationship with the children | 13 | 12 | 16 | 09 | 2.58 | A | 18 | 15 | 17 | 0 | 2.52 | A |
| 6. | Social withdrawal of the children due to shame | 20 | 13 | 17 | 00 | 3.06 | A | 10 | 22 | 11 | 7 | 2.70 | A |
| 7. | Children may join bad groups. | 8 | 21 | 11 | 10 | 2.54 | A | 15 | 21 | 7 | 7 | 2.88 | A |
| 8. | It can lead to teenage pregnancy among the girls | 18 | 22 | 02 | 08 | 3.00 | A | 18 | 14 | 12 | 6 | 2.88 | A |
| 9. | Children may perform badly in school when mother is battered. | 10 | 22 | 11 | 07 | 2.70 | A | 14 | 18 | 10 | 8 | 2.76 | A |
| 10. | Feeling of insecurity on the part of the children | 21 | 20 | 05 | 04 | 3.16 | A | 13 | 13 | 14 | 10 | 2.58 | A |
| 11. | Children may take sides with either parents. | 15 | 20 | 15 | 00 | 3.00 | A | 20 | 10 | 17 | 3 | 2.94 | A |
| 12. | Siblings rivalry/quarrels may ensue | 12 | 14 | 18 | 00 | 2.52 | A | 19 | 21 | 6 | 4 | 3.10 | A |
| 13. | Children becoming truants when mother is battered | 10 | 21 | 12 | 07 | 2.68 | A | 21 | 20 | 05 | 04 | 3.16 | A |
| Grand X | | | | | | 2.76 | A | | | | | 2.78 | A |

The findings in table 2 reveals that the item mean scores of women in Anambra state on the implications of wife battering are: 2.44, 3.28, 3.10, 2.14, 2.38, 3.06, 3.54, 3.00, 2.14, 3.16, 3.00, 2.52 and 2.68 respectively, while in Ebonyi State the mean scores of the women on those items are: 3.04, 2.38, 3.12, 3.04, 2.38, 2.70, 2.88, 2.76, 2.58, 2.94, 3.10 and 2.34 respectively. The grand mean scores of the two groups are 2.76 and 2.78 respectively.

3.2 DISCUSSION

The finding of the study in table 1, reveals that both men in Anambra and Ebonyi states agreed that majority of the items listed are the reasons that made men batter their wives. However, the two groups of men tend to disagree on certain items raised. While men in Anambra state disagree that in-

ability to satisfy their sexual desire is a factor for wife battering, men in Ebonyi state were of the opinion that it is a factor. Similarly, men in Anambra state disagree that disobedience to husbands instruction, wife's inability to cook choice food, feeling of inferiority, drunkenness, unemployment and poverty on the part of the man, and the wife's' uncleanliness are causes of wife battering. This is contrary to the opinion of men from Ebonyi state on those issues; hence they agree that they are all causes of wife battering.

On the other hand, the respondents from Anambra state agree that wife's dishonesty is one of the reasons for wife battering, while the respondents in Ebonyi state disagree that it is not one of the causes. The two groups of respondents however, held similar view that illiteracy on the part of the

wife is a cause for battering. This report is contrary to Okwubunka's (1996) view that a batterer is an angry, suspicious and tense individual who is terrifying and surrounded by an aura of helplessness. In effect, helplessness is the root cause of wife battering. This view was corroborated by Dollard, in Ellah, (1999) who stated that all aggressive acts are caused by frustration and when frustration is not controlled can lead to battering. Ellah(1999) equally opined that wife battering can be attributed to certain prevailing factors ranging from depression to unsatisfied needs.

The issues of poverty and men having the right to discipline an erring wife as raised by Advani (2010) on the other hand tend to agree with the findings of this study. In other words, if a wife obeys her husband and does not give room for frustrating or provoking him, he will not dream of battering her.

From the above findings, one can infer that people's beliefs and ideologies on wife battering vary and consequently have different reasons for such acts. This may stem from the fact that people have different views and approaches to problems of marriage. The differences in the opinion of the two groups of respondents could be attributed to the way each individual is affected by such prevailing factors as depression and unsatisfied need as raised by Ellah (2009). The grand mean score of 2.53 and 2.81 respectively reveals that majority of the identified items are the causes of wife battering.

Findings in Table 2, reveals that women in Anambra and Ebonyi states generally were of the opinion that wife battering has some social implications on them except items 20, 21, 28 and 32 where the two groups differ in their opinions. While respondents from Anambra state disagree that wife battering causes women to withdraw from social gathering, those in Ebonyi state were of the opinion that wife battering makes them to withdraw from social gathering. The differences in their opinion could be attributed to the individual adjustment to issues of life. For all other items, the two groups of respondents agreed that battering invariably affects their self image, communication with their husbands and relationship with children. It equally instills fear on them. On the part of the children, they feel insecure, shame, and take to certain social abnormal behaviors.

The implications are equally psychological because it perverts the thought system and world view of its victims. Wife battering readily sends a signal of "a good for nothing" mentality into the psychic sub consciousness of the women. In this case the woman loses her self confidence and self assertiveness of "I am because my husband loves me". It has great social implications since it impinges on the social interaction and harmony existing in the larger society. This is of great veracity because the family as the smallest unit of the society

mirrors the entire society and as such, whatever happens in it reflects with serious immediacy in the global society.

3.3 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION:

The home is the smallest unit of human organization. It is a place where basic societal values are first learnt. Certain cultural values with regard to sex-role stereotypic norms in so many nations of the world do not give room for healthy home environment which invariably, affects the psychological and emotional status of the members of the family. This if not checked may lead to the underdevelopment of Igbo race and the nation at large.

Based on the findings and implications of this study, the following recommendations were drawn.

- Since it is obvious from literature and the findings of the study that the basic structure of the society over wife-battering may not be easily changed, the best alternative should be institutionalizing counseling centres in the various states of the Federation, for the purposes of helping couples learn marriage and parenting skills that will foster good marital and family relationships and consequently enhance the country's social developmental effort. The husband and the wife should be counseled to maintain some level of love, understanding and equality with respect in order to accomplish the envisioned end of the family, for the aphorism sustains its philosophical onions that, "a woman turns a house into a home".
- Women organization should persistently join their women counterparts in other countries of the world to make their voice heard in the United Nation's Security Council since it is obvious that women's security is tied to global security.
- There is need for social and behavioural transformation of Nigeria and Igbo society, in particular, through counseling services for a better gender egalitarian society. Sen (1999) was of the opinion that "Reducing the prevalence of wife battering requires men's and women's liberation from binding cultural stereotypic norms.
- Women activists should not relent in carrying out research in the area of wife battering so as to let the government know the gravity of the violation of the women's right and present resolutions on how they feel the problem could be tackled.
- Women organizations and NGO's should be more committed in making conscientious effort to create awareness among female folk, encouraging them to ignore certain cultural structures like wife battering, that impinge on their rights and forge ahead.

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