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Impact of Gender-Based Abuse on Women's Economic Wellbeing and Participation in Public Life in Abeokuta Metropolis in Ogun State, Nigeria (Pp. 313-326)

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Abstract

This study established the influence of gender-based abuse on women's economic wellbeing and participation in public life. A total of two-hundred and fifty married women from Abeokuta metropolis constituted the sample for the study. Their ages ranged from 25 years to 49 years with a mean age of 37 years and standard deviation of 8.48. The two instruments used were author-constructed questionnaires with 0.69 and 0.74 reliability coefficient respectively. The data obtained were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, and chi-square (X^2) statistics. The results indicated that the three research questions raised and tested contributed significantly to the prediction of the dependent variable. Based on the results of this finding, it was recommended that those in the helping professional should take cognizance of those variables that have been found to influence women's economic well-being and participation in public life.

Keywords: Gender-Based Abuse, Women Economic Wellbeing, Participation in Public Life, Intimate Relationship, Nigeria.

Introduction

Gender-based abuse is a behaviour, attitude, and belief in which a partner in an intimate relationship attempts to maintain power and control over the other through the use of psychological, physical, and/or sexual coercion

WHO (1997); and UNIFEM (1999). It is one of the most common form of abuse against women by their husbands or other intimate male partners.

Gender-based abuse occurs in all countries and transcends social, economic, religious and cultural groups – UNIFEM (2002). The negative consequences of abuse extend beyond women’s sexual and reproductive health to their overall health, the welfare of their children, and even the economic and social fabric of nation. By sapping women’s energy, undermining their confidence, and compromising their health, gender-based abuse deprives society of women’s full participation. As reported by UNIFEM, “women cannot lend their labour or creative ideas fully if they are burdened with social, moral and economic scars of abuse” – Carvillo (1992).

In addition to its human cost, gender-based abuse against women hinders women’s participation in public life and undermines the economic wellbeing of societies. Although techniques of estimating the economic and social cost of abuse are imperfect, studies have begin to provide insights into the ways that gender-based abuse undermines women’s participation reduces their productivity, and drives up costs to the economy, including medical care costs.

Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Research: Women’s Participation

Gender-based abuse hinders women; participation in development projects and lessens their contribution to social and economic development. In Mexico, a study that sought to learn why women often stopped participating in development projects found that men’s threats were a major reason. Men perceived the growing empowerment of their wives as a threat to their control and beat them to try to stop it – Carrillo (1992). In Papua New Guinea some husbands have prevented their wives from attending meetings by locking them in the house, by pulling them off vehicle taking them to the meetings, or by pursuing and dragging them home – Bradley (1994). Even if men do not prevent women’s participation, they may use force to deprive them of its benefits. Women participation in micro-credit schemes in Bangladesh and Peru, and garment workers in the Mexican maquiladoras report that husbands often beat their wives and take what the women have earned – Carillo (1992); Schuler, Hashemi and Badal (1998); and Schuler, Hashemi, Riley and Akhter (1996). In Nigeria, some husbands often strip their wives naked with beating. Some even go as far as denying them house-keep allowance for staying out at night – Fawole et al (2003). He equally

found that 24% of young women had been violated by partners. In Lagos, Odujinrin et al found that 31% of adult women had been physically assaulted by an intimate partners – Odujunrin (1993). Ilika et al reported that 39.3% of women of childbearing age in Anambra State had experienced economic deprivation – Ilika et al (2002), while 78.8% of women in Imo State reported being burdened with social and economic scars – by their male counterparts – Okemgbo, Omideyi, and Odimegwu (2002).

To avoid abuse, many women censor their behaviour to suit what they think will be accepted to their partners, in effect “making women their own jailers – Bradley (1994). In Papua New Guinea, for example, a study by the Department of Education found that the main reason that female teachers gave for not taking promotions was fear that, it would provoke their husbands to more violence – Gibson (1990). Such fears can lead to adverse effects on the health of women and their families, as well as reducing earnings. Fear of rape, for example, has contributed to under nutrition among Ethiopian refugee families living in Sudanese border camps – Lapin (1992). Ethiopian women refugees surveyed said they cooked fewer meals for their children because they fear being raped while out collecting firewood. In fact, many had been raped during the 2-to-3 hour forays to collect fuel. In Gujarat, India, female-rural health promoters discussing obstacles to their work emphasized their reluctance to travel alone between villages for fear of being raped. They asked for self-defense training to continue their work – Khanna (1992).

Women's Productivity

Researchers have only begun to explore the possible impact of gender-based abuse on women's labour force participation and earnings, and studies yield inconsistent conclusions. In studies in Santiago, Chile, Managua, Nicaragua, and Chicago, for example, the impact of gender-based abuse on women's likelihood of being employed varied greatly – Lloyd and Taluc (1999); and Morrison and Orlando (1997). Some women worked less in order to protect their children or because their partners would not allow them to work, while other women sought employment to lessen financial dependence on their abuser.

Gender-based abuse does not appear to have a consistent impact on women's earnings and their ability to remain in a job, however – Lloyd and Taluc (1999); Morrison and Orlando (1997); and Brown (1998). The study in Chicago found that women with histories of abuse were more likely to have experienced spells of unemployment, to have more job turn-over, and to

suffer more physical and mental health problems that could affect their job performance. They also had lower incomes and were much more likely to receive public assistance – Lloyd and Taluc (1999). Similarly, in Managua, India, abused women earned 46% less than women who did not suffer abuse, even after controlling for other factors affecting earnings – Morrison and Orlando (1997). In Nigeria, the situation is not totally different, the number of the abused women is much higher as 59.4%, and they are less likely to undertake paid job for fear of molestation from their husbands – Fawole et al (2003).

Costs to the Economy

The costs of gender-based abuse on the women and the nation are substantial. For example, in Canada a 1995 study estimated that abuse against women cost the country 1.5 billion Canadian dollars (US \$1.1. billion) in lost labour productivity and increased use of medical and community support services – Day (1995). Another study in Canada put the cost of abuse against women much higher, after including costs for social services, criminal justice, labour and employment, and the health care system. The study estimated that physical and sexual abuse of girls and women cost the economy 4.2 billion Canadian dollars each year, nearly 90% of that borne by the government – Greaves, Hankivsky, and Kingson-Riechters (1995).

Surprisingly not woman who have experienced physical or sexual assault in either childhood or adulthood use health services more often than other women, as studies in Nicaragua, the US, Zimbabwe and Nigeria show – Felitti (1991); Koss (1993); Leserman, Drossman, LI, Toomey, Nachman, and Glogau (1996); Morrison and Orlando (1997); Sansone, Wiederman, and Samsone (1997); Walker, Gelfand, Katon, Koss, Korff, Barnstein and Russo (1999); Watts (1999); and Wisner, Gilmer, Saltzman and Zink (2000). Over their lifetimes, victims of abuse average more surgeries, physician and pharmacy visits, hospital stays, and mental health consultations than other women, even after accounting for other factors affecting health care use.

Most studies on gender-based abuse has been focused on pattern, and prevalence. It is therefore, not to the knowledge of the researcher that studies linking gender-based abuse and women's economic wellbeing and participation in public life have ever been conducted. It is against this background that, this study becomes relevant in filling such missing gaps in our knowledge in the issue of gender-based abuse factors influencing

women's economic wellbeing and participation in public life in Abeokuta metropolis, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Purpose of this Study

This study explored the degree to which gender-based abuse in intimate relationships influence women's economic wellbeing and participation in public life. Varying dimensions of gender-based abuse were examined, including women's age and education, decision-making over large household purchases, women's control over money for specific items, women's adherence to cultural beliefs about men's right and privileges in relationships and partners' level of communication.

To achieve these objectives, the following research questions have been posed and answered in the study at 0.05 alpha level.

1. To what extent did women's control and decision-making over large household purchases influences women's economic wellbeing and participation in public life?
2. To what extent did couple's quality relationship and control influences women's economic wellbeing and participation in public life?
3. To what extent did partner's level of communication and adherence to cultural beliefs about men's right and privileges in relationships influence women's economic wellbeing and participation in public life?

Methodology

Research Design

The study is an ex-post factor research design. It is an after-fact study which does not involve the manipulation of any variable. The paramount thing was to ascertain the relationship of the independent variable (women's control over large household purchases, control in the relationship and level of communication and adherence to cultural beliefs about men's right and privileges in relationship) on the dependent variable (women's economic wellbeing and participation in public life) without manipulating either of them.

Participants

A total of two hundred and seventy-two (272) currently married women aged 25-49 years were randomly selected from (i) Ogun State Teaching Service

Commission – 52 (ii) Ogun State Civil Service Commission – 56, (iii) Police Officers Wives Association (POWA) Abeokuta branch – 54, (iv) Ogun State Women Political Group – 52, and Nigerian Army Officers Wives Association (NAOWA) – 58 all in Abeokuta metropolis in Ogun State, Nigeria. Twenty-two participants were eliminated from the analysis because they had missing information on variables of interest, resulting in a sample size of 250. The mean age of the participants was 37 years and standard deviation of 8.48.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used in the data collection.

- (1) Gender-Based Abuse Questionnaire (GAQ).
- (2) Women's Labour Force Participation and Earnings Scale (WLFPEs).

GAQ is a four-point likert scale questionnaire in which participants were asked to indicate their feeling about each statement. It contains 30 items response format anchored Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. It has 0.74 and 0.79 as the internal consistency and revalidation reliability respectively. WLFPEs is a 25-item questionnaire administered to the participants on women's economic wellbeing and participation in public life. The test-retest reliability of the scale was found to be 0.69 and 0.73 respectively. The two instruments were author-constructed.

Procedure for Data Collection

The participants for the study were administered the two questionnaire in their various locations with the assistance of two researchers. The administration of the questionnaires to the participants took the researchers two weeks to complete. The collected questionnaires were scored and the data obtained from them were analyzed to answer the research questions. On the whole, 272 copies of the questionnaires were distributed and 250 copies were returned fully filled, giving a return rate of 91.91%.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analysed using chi-square (X^2) statistics to establish the influence of gender-based abuse factors and women's economic wellbeing and participation in public life. Also, frequency counts and percentages were used to determine the characteristics of the participants

Results

Table 1 above shows the frequency and percent distribution of the characteristic of the sample involved in the study. Six variables (educational background, chronological age range, number of children, duration in marriage, husband's history of alcohol abuse, and witness of interparental violence) were examined with the following outcomes. A total of 250 married women were involved in the study, and their educational background shows that five of them had masters degree/doctorate degree representing 2.0%, 86 HND/University Degree representing 34.4%, 107 had OND/NCE representing 42.8%, 43 had school certificate/teachers' Grade II representing 17.2%, while 9 had primary education representing 3.6% and non of the participants never attended one school or the other. Therefore, the implication of the above information, is that, all the participants were literates to a large extent, and this is a pointer to show that abuse in whatever form may be minimal if not reduced or eliminated by their intimate male partners.

A total of 27 participants (10.8%) fall between 25-29 years, 21 (8.4%) falls between 30-34 years, 64 (25.6%) falls between 35-39 years, 79 (31.6%) falls between 40-44 years, and 59 (23.6%) falls between 45-49 years. This implies that those between 40-44 years were involved most in the study, while those between 30-34 years were least participants in the study. The number of children in the family shows that, 75 families (30.0%) had two children, 61 (24.4%) had three children, 52 (20.8%) had one child, 34 (13.6%) had four children and 28 (11.2%) had five children and above respectively. This implies therefore, that, families with one to three children were mostly involved in the study.

On the duration of couples in marriage, the outcome shows that, 116 (46.4%) had stayed for 11-14 years, followed by 63(25.2%) that falls between 5-9 years, and (19.6%) shows 0-4 years as the least. This implies therefore that, majority of the participants have stayed with their partners for a minimum of 11 years and maximum of 14 years. Only 22 (8.8%) have stayed for 15 years and above in their relationship.

On the husband's history of alcohol abuse as responded to by the wives, the outcome shows that, 106 (42.4%) take alcohol moderately, 71 (28.4%) are occasional users of alcohol, 42 (16.8%) are non-alcoholic, while, 31 (12.4%) are addicted to alcohol intake. The implication of the above responses shows that only 42 (16.8%) of the families may not experience abuse resulting from alcohol use, and 71 (28.4%) and 106 (42.4%) may likely experience abuse

from alcohol use, and 31 (12.4%) of the families involved in the study will experience abuse because of the heavy intake of alcohol by their husbands.

The participants were made to respond to ever witnessing interparental violence in childhood. The outcome shows that, 101 (40.4) responded as “I don’t know”, 82 (32.8%) said no to witnessing interpersonal violence, and 67 (26.8%) responded positively to have witnessed interparental violence in childhood. The implication of the above responses shows that 82 (32.8%) of the participants may disapprove abuse from their intimate male partners because they are not exposed to, and neither have they witness it. While 67 (26.8%) may not see the behaviour as strange because it has been witnessed.

Research Question 1: To what extent did women’s control and decision-making over large household purchases influences women’s economic wellbeing and participation in public life?

The result of the research question on Table 2 shows that each of the independent variables made significant contribution to the prediction on women’s economic wellbeing and participation in public life at 0.05 level. This implies that there is a strong relationship between those factors and women’s labour force participation and earnings. The contributions of each of the variables shows that, wife dominated (X^2 cal = 33.956) is the most potent followed by other dominated (X^2 cal = 29.762); perishable goods (X^2 cal = 16.986); clothes and toiletries (X^2 cal = 12.716); husband dominated (X^2 cal = 5.969); and non-perishable goods (X^2 cal = 1.268) in that order.

Research Question 2: To what extent did couple’s quality relationship and control influence women’s economic wellbeing and participation in public life?

The result of the research question on Table 3 shows that each of the variables were significant contributors to the prediction on women’s economic wellbeing and participation in public life at 0.05 alpha level. The result shows a perfect relationship between those factors and women’s labour force participation and earnings.

Research Question 3: To what extent did partner’s level of communication and adherence to cultural beliefs about men’s right and privileges in relationships influence women’s economic wellbeing and participation in public life?

The result on the research question on Table 4 indicates that the six variables are strong predictors on women's economic wellbeing and participation in public life. It was observed that the response to the research question shows that all items were significant at 0.05 level.

Discussion of Findings

The result on Table 1 shows the frequency and percent distribution based on the characteristics of the participants involved in the study vis-à-vis educational background, age, number of children, duration in marriage, husband's history of alcohol abuse and witness interparental violence.

The results on research question on Table 2 indicate the significant positions of the variables tested women economic wellbeing and participation in public life. The significant position of the results is in agreement with studies conducted by scholars as, Carillo (1992); and UNIFEM (2002) and Bradley (1994).

The extent to which the second research question on Table 3 predicted women's economic wellbeing and participation in public life can be attested to by the result. The result shows a perfect relationship between those factors and women's economic wellbeing and participation in public life which was significant at 0.05 alpha level. The result was however supported by Fawole et al (2003); Odujinrin et al (1993); Okemgbo, Omideyi and Odimegwu (2002); and Ilika (2002). The result was further supported by scholars as Gibson (1990); Lapin (1992); Khanna (1992) and Morrison and Orlando (1997).

The result on research question on Table 4 indicates the significant position of the variables put to test and the dependent variable. The significant position of the results was upheld – Lapin (1992); Khanna (1992); Lloyd and Taluc (1999); and Morrison and Orlando (1997).

Implication of Findings

The study had established the role of gender-based abuse in intimate partner relationship in Nigeria and its importance in order to inform efforts to prevent it reoccurrence and reduce its deleterious effects on women.

The study also had established that, all the various variables tested had contributed positively to the occurrence of the problem, therefore, psychologists, educators, and guidance and counselors should be cognizant of those variables that have been found to influence women economic wellbeing and participation in public life.

Finally, the findings from this study implicate the need for counseling psychologists and others in the helping professions to design intervention programmes for modifying couples attitudes and behaviours on gender matters.

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Table 1: Frequency and Percent Distribution of the Characteristics of the Sample involved in the study

S/N	Variables	Frequency	%
1.	Educational background		
	No Formal Education	Nil	Nil
	Primary Education	09	3.6
	School Cert./Trs. Colleges	43	17.2
	OND/NCE	107	42.8
	HND/University Degree	86	34.4
	Masters Degree/Ph.D.	05	2.0
	Total	250	100
2	Chronological Age Range		
	25-29 years	27	10.8
	30-34 years	21	8.4
	35-39 years	64	25.6
	40-44 years	79	31.6
	45-49 years	59	23.6
	Total	250	100
3	Number of Children		
	One	52	20.8
	Two	75	30.0
	Three	61	24.4
	Four	34	13.6
	Five and above	28	11.2
	Total	250	100
4	Duration in Marriage		
	0-4 years	49	19.6
	5-9 years	63	25.2
	10-14 years	116	46.4
	15 and above	22	8.8
	Total	250	100
5.	Husbands' History of Alcohol Use		

	Non-Alcoholics/Never	42	16.8
	Occasional Drinker	71	28.4
	Moderately	106	42.4
	Chronic/Alcohol Addicts	31	12.4
	Total	250	100
6.	Witness Interparental Violence in Childhood		
	I don't know/remember	101	40.4
	No	82	32.8
	Yes	57	26.8
	Total	250	100

Table 2:X² Summary on women's control and decision-making on household purchases and women's economic wellbeing and participation in public life.

S/N	Variables	X ² Cal.	Df	X ² tab	Sig. (2 tailed)
1.	Perishable goods	16.986	3	7.81	0.001
2.	Non-perishable goods	1.268	3	7.81	0.737
3.	Clothes and Toiletries	12.716	3	7.81	0.005
4.	Wife dominated	33.956	3	7.81	0.000
5.	Husband dominated	5.969	3	7.81	0.113
6.	Other dominated	29.762	3	7.81	0.000

Significant at 0.05 alpha level

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5.	Husband dominated	5.969	3	7.81	0.113
6.	Other dominated	29.762	3	7.81	0.000

Significant at 0.05 alpha level

Table 3: X² Summary on couple's quality relationship and control influence women's economic wellbeing and participation in public life.

S/N	Variables	X ² Cal.	Df	X ² tab	Sig. (2 tailed)
1.	Spends free time with me	47.558	12	21.03	0.000
2.	Accuses me of unfaithfulness	40.688	12	21.03	0.000
3.	Respects my wishes/desires	32.057	12	21.03	0.000
4.	Consults my opinion on various household issues	41.434	12	21.03	0.000
5.	Does not trust me with money	48.058	12	21.03	0.000
6.	Does not permit me meeting my female friends	38.509	12	21.03	0.000

Significant at 0.05 alpha level.

Table 4: X² Summary partner's level of communication and adherence to cultural beliefs about men's right and privileges in relationships influence women's economic wellbeing and participation in public life

S/N	Variables	X ² Cal.	Df	X ² tab	Sig. (2 tailed)
1.	Events at home	40.771	6	14.45	0.000
2.	Event at work	14.851	6	14.45	0.000
3.	Money matters	26.149	6	14.45	0.000
4.	Community happenings	23.037	6	14.45	0.000
5.	She refuses to have sex with the husband	33.239	6	14.45	0.000
6.	She neglect the children	28.238	6	14.45	0.000

Significant at 0.05 alpha level.