

Effects of Domestic Violence on Young People in Family Setting: Evidence from Omu-Aran, Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract- Interest on the effects of domestic violence has increased recently. However, only a few studies have attended to its effects on the witnesses, that is, Nigerian young people in family setting. This article examines the perceptions, experiences, and the various ways in which the occurrence of domestic violence have shaped the lives of Nigerian young people. It uses data emerging from a survey with the use of questionnaire administered to 150 in-school and out of school young people in Omu-Aran, Kwara state to examine the effects of domestic violence on them. Findings suggest that the experiences of respondents exert considerable influence on their perceptions of violence, family life and significantly shaped their decision as relates to choosing a life partner. The study concludes that domestic violence is indeed a social problem that affects Nigerian young people in the family setting. It recommends the involvement of various stakeholders including counselors, religious and community groups, government as well as other institutions to focus on propagating anti-domestic violence enlightenment programmes that discourage violence in family setting.

Key Terms—Domestic violence, Young people, Family setting

I. INTRODUCTION

Globally, domestic violence is a significant problem and one of the most pervasive human rights challenges especially for the most parts of African societies where issues relating to partners violence are largely treated as hidden phenomena (Izugbara et al., 2008). While some intimate relationships can be pleasurable and fulfilling, others may be characterized by assaultive and coercive behaviours including physical, sexual, psychological attacks, and economic coercion which are hazardous to the individual's physical and emotional well-being (Domestic Violence Facts, 2007; Adebayo and Kolawole, 2013).

In most cases, domestic violence consists of individuals who are married, cohabiting or as same sex couples (UNICEF, 2006). Despite the prevalence of under-reported cases of domestic violence affirmed in previous studies (Durose et al., 2005; Saidi et al., 2008; Olabode and Abayomi, 2013; Adebayo and Kolawole, 2013), a global report identified one in

every five women to have been confronted with one form of violent attack (WHO, 2005). In Nigeria, over 65 per cent of educated women and 55 per cent of low income women are subjected to domestic violence (Abayomi, 2013).

More importantly, studies have found that people who witness subsequent domestic violence often suffer from tension, guilt, anxiety, despair or from what sociologists describes as “cradle of violence” (Gelles and Straus, 1988) or a “haven in a heartless world” (Lasch, 1977:216). As documented previously, over 275 million children worldwide were globally reported to have witnessed and consequently exposed to domestic violence (UNICEF, 2006). Similarly, in a US based study, about 15.5 million children were reported to be living in households experiencing domestic violence (Mc Donald et. al., 2006).

Furthermore, it has been argued that families with continued marital conflicts are likely to produce children who are vulnerable to problems of personality adjustment or abnormalities (Carlson, 2000; Abayomi, 2013) and considered vulnerable to a range of short and long term physical, mental, and sexual consequences (Carlson, 2000; Borgat et. al., 2006; Aihie, 2009; Abayomi and Olabode, 2013). This has been found to be particularly true for young people who witnessed domestic violence (Abraham and Jewkes; Gupta et al., 2008). In addition, studies have found that such children often develop some levels of emotional and behavioural problems which may include adolescence delinquency and feelings of insecurity as they grow up (Alexandra, 2005; Stanley, 2011).

While previous literature on family and domestic violence have centered focus on the devastating effects of domestic violence on women and the manner in which violence is perpetrated among married and cohabiting couple, little is known about the effect of the violent acts on the witnesses especially the growing young members of such families. In Nigeria, studies on domestic or intimate partners violence and its effects on young people witnessing it has hardly been established.

Therefore, the present study examines the effects of domestic violence on young people growing up within the

family setting. This research delves into questions about what the sampled young people understand about domestic violence, whether they have experienced or witnessed any form of violence, and how such experiences shaped the various aspects of their lives.

The Concept of Domestic Violence and Its Effects

Generally, domestic violence or intimate partner violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviours including physical, sexual and psychological attacks as well as economic coercion used by adults or adolescents against their current or former intimate partners' (UNICEF, 2006:3). It is a considerable social problem which has both short and long-term effects on the victim (Straus, 1992). For instance, in a sample of about 4,000 American adolescents, Song et al., (1998), reported that, anger is one of the most observable symptoms in young people that had been previously exposed to domestic violence.

Additionally, almost all the women who had experienced violent attacks exhibit symptoms of major depression and related health problems such as chronic pain, depression, drug and alcohol abuse and so forth (WHO, 2013; Spilbury et al., 2008; Herrenkohl et al., 2005; Stanley, 2011). As can be observed, children have been identified as principal victims of domestic violence (Holden, 2003). Thus, witnessing abuse or residing in an environment where someone else is a victim, can be psychologically devastating for young people and the effects vary from physical, mental, emotional to behavioural problems (Abayomi, 2013).

At a theoretical level, Sutherland (1939) introduced social learning theory along with some elements such as differential association theory and other leaning theories based on the premise that individual's behavior is learnt through interactions and group learning (*see also* Akers, 1998). In this context, learning takes place according to the frequency, duration, intensity, and priority of social interactions with family, peers, and other social groups with whom individual associates. By applying this theory to the concept of domestic violence, the family is viewed as the primary social group where individuals have frequent and intense interactions over a long period of time. Through interaction with members of family, individuals learn and develop certain attitudes and behaviours which may be classified as 'positive' or 'negative' behavior. Thus, domestic violence is a less personal choice and more as a result of differential socialization processes. In line with this, Bandura (1977) as a chief proponent of social learning theory also viewed human behavior in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioural and environmental influences. According to Bandura (1977), social learning or "observational learning" involves how behaviours and attitudes can be modeled merely by observing the behaviours and attitudes of others. Thus, observational learning can occur in relation to four components which can be highlighted as follows:

- Attention: Where an individual gives full attention to the characteristics of the modeled behaviour. For example, children from violent home give full concentration to the quarrel between their parents in order to know why and how it happens.
- Retention: Having given their full attention to the event, individuals have some way of retaining what have been seen and able to remember the details of

the behaviour in order to learn and reproduce the behaviour.

- Reproduction: An individuals' have the necessary motor skills to reproduce the behavior that was modeled for one to be able to reproduce it in latter life.
- Motivation: There is always a motivation or driving force to reproduce the observed behaviour. As Bandura concludes, if all of the above factors are present, an individual will probably know how to imitate the model, however in some cases, individual may choose not to reproduce the learnt behaviours.

From this theory, it can be deduced that individuals especially children learn their roles through the process of socialization. Socialization helps an individual to develop their personality in the society. Thus, children who experienced violent behaviours as victims, may likely emulate the act (Mangolin, 1998, Mathias et al., 1999, Evans et al. 2008). Succinctly, it could argued that the social learning theory appears to be relevant to the present study in all aspects, findings from the present research shall be explored to refute or confirm the practicability of this theory among young people in Omu-Aran, kwara state, Nigeria.

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The descriptive survey method was used to provide understanding to the problem of domestic violence among in-school and out-of school young people (male and female) who live in Omu-Aran, Kwara state, Nigeria. A semi-structured questionnaire was administered to 180 young people. However, a total of 150 questionnaires were retrieved from current students of Landmark University (100 and 200 levels) and the out of school young people (that is, those who are not currently enrolled in any formal institution). The decision to involve only 100 and 200 level students in the University was to restrict sample population to those between ages 11-17 which is conceptualized as 'young people' in the present study. This age group was also considered as a way of covering those young people that would provide rich and meaningful accounts of their experiences and effects of domestic violence on them. The inclusion of the out of school young people was also considered as a way of covering the opinion of young people in their different categories.

III. RESEARCH SETTING AND PROCEDURES

The research setting of the study was Landmark university and Omu-Aran community. The Landmark University is a private educational institution owned by Dr. David Olaniyi Oyedepo, the presiding bishop of the Living Faith Church world-wide. The community, Omu-Aran is located in Irepodun Local Government Area (LGA), Kwara state. The LGA is bounded by Osun state by the North, Ekiti state by the south, Offa local government area by the East and West respectively. It is composed of the following villages: Ajase, Arandun, Esie, Agbonda, Omu-aran, and Oro. The people in this area speak yoruba language and another local dialect called "Igbo-na". Omu-Aran community has approved primary schools, secondary schools, and one private university (Landmark University). Most of the inhabitants engage in farming because the community is endowed with savannah/rain forest, vegetation on a plain terrain with patches of rivers and streams which helps in crop germination and animal grazing.

In terms of cultural values, the community is a patrilineal and patriarchal society, where the family is viewed as a sacred institution and the basis of social organization. As in most of Africa (Izugbara, 2004), men are the heads of their households and their wives live under their oversight. In common with most Nigerian societies, landowning and land use rights are patriarchal and the community is headed by a king (*Oba*) assisted by a council of chiefs, consisting of old men rooted in the traditions and culture of the community.

The sampling method used was stratified and random sampling for the selection of 100 sampled students from the 3 colleges of the Landmark University while purposive sampling was utilized to select 50 out of school institution young people (that is, those within ages 11-17 years that are not currently enroll in any formal institution).

Two field assistants were recruited from Landmark University, Omu-Aran. Respondents' consents were sought before administering each questionnaire, and confidentiality of their responses were fully guaranteed and adhered to.

The questionnaire consist of a set of close ended questions which cover different aspects of the research focus. It is divided into three sections, A, B and C. Section A addresses the respondents' personal data such as their age, sex, level of education, parental marital status, and religion. Section B deals with the respondents' specific knowledge of domestic violence while section C focuses on the effects of domestic violence on the sampled young people.

Data analysis was carried out with the use of statistical analysis with the use of frequency tables and percentages.

IV. RESULTS

Section A: Table 1.0. Respondents' Demographic Data

Sex	Frequency	Percentage %
Distribution of Respondents by Sex		
Male	61	40.6
Female	89	59.3
Total	150	100%
Educational qualification		
100 students	50	33.3
200 students	50	33.3
The out of school group (primary school certificate or no formal education)	50	33.3
Total	150	100%
Respondents' religious affiliation		
Christianity	98	65.3
Muslim	49	32.6
Tradionalist	3	2
Total	150	100
Distribution of Respondents according to parents' marital status		

Married	93	62
Widowed	7	4.6
Separated	45	30
Divorced	5	3.3
Total	150	100

Source: Researcher's survey, 2014.

Table 1.0 above unfolds the demographical information of the respondents. The first is on the sex distribution of the respondents. The result shows that, 59.3% are female, while 40.6% of the respondents are male. This suggests that there were more females in the distribution than males.

Second, the above table reveals the level of education attained by respondents. As observed from the above table, the first category of the sampled young people are 50 (33.3%) who are currently in their first year (100 level) of tertiary institution. Similarly, another category of respondents are 50 (33.3%) students in their 200 level of tertiary institution while the third set is the out of school young people, consisting of 50(33.3%) respondents with primary education certificates and those that never attended school.

In addition, the above reveals frequency distribution of respondents' by religious affiliations. It can be deduced from the table that 65.3% of respondents were Christians, 32.6% were Muslims while only 2% were traditionalists. This demonstrates that the sampled population was dominantly Christians. This is unsurprising based on the fact that the tertiary institution where the present research is conducted is a faith based- (Christian) institution.

The last on table 1.0 is the distribution of respondents by parental marital status. The table shows that a majority (62 %.) of the respondents' parents were currently married, 4.6 % were widows or widowers, 30% were separated, while the remaining 3.36% were divorced. A further analysis of the respondents' data will shed light on reasons behind these figures.

Section B: Table 2.0. Distribution of respondents by meanings of domestic violence, the types of domestic violence they have mostly witnessed their perceptions of the events and who was the perpetrator

Variables	Responses	Frequency (150)	Percentage (%)
Respondents' meanings of domestic violence	• Persistent argument between spouses	13	8.6
	• Husband and wife fighting	138	92
	• Physical attack of one's spouse	143	95.3
	• others (specified)	3	2
The types of domestic violence mostly witnessed by respondents	• Physical attack of wife	141	94
	• Damaging or throwing out wife's property	123	82
	• Causing physical injury on wife	98	65.3
	• Husband's battering	22	4
How respondents view domestic violence	• Inhuman	123	82
	• Very bad	146	97.3
	• An act of hatred for one's spouse	113	75.3
	• Self-defense	24	16
	• Corrective measure	2	1.3

Source: Researcher's survey, 2014.

From the above table, a majority of respondents (92%) believed that domestic violence implies fighting between spouses and most especially when it involves physical attack of one's spouse (95.3%). A few respondents also describe domestic violence as persistent argument between couples (8.6%) while the remaining 2% of the respondents gave other meanings like yelling, insulting or intimidating one's spouse. From the above, it could be observed that a majority of respondents understood domestic violence as physical attack of one's partner especially wives.

In addition, the table reveals the various types of domestic violence that has been witnessed by the respondents. The first response shows that physical attack of wife is the major means through which violence are been perpetrated. This ranked highest (94%) among other types of abuse. Following this is another form of violence which involves damaging or throwing out wife's property by the male partner or husband. About 82% of the respondents attest to have witnessed this form of violence. From above data, it was also revealed that over 65% of respondents have witnessed cases of domestic violence whereby the male partner inflicted physical injury on wife. Only 2% of respondents affirmed to have witnessed situations of husband battering. Thus, the above data corroborate existing literature which viewed women as the dominant victims of intimate partners violence (Huang and Gunn, 2001; Durose et al., 2005; Saidi et al., 2008; Olabode and Abayomi, 2013; Adebayo and Kolawole, 2013).

When the young people were asked about their perceptions of domestic violence, most of them used negative connotations such as inhuman (82%), very bad (97.3%), and a demonstration of hatred for one's spouse (75.3%). It was also found that some of the respondents viewed abuse of one's partner as self defense (16%) while a few (1.3%) construct domestic violence as a corrective measure for one's spouse.

Section C: Table 3.0. Effects of Domestic Violence on children (young people) in the family

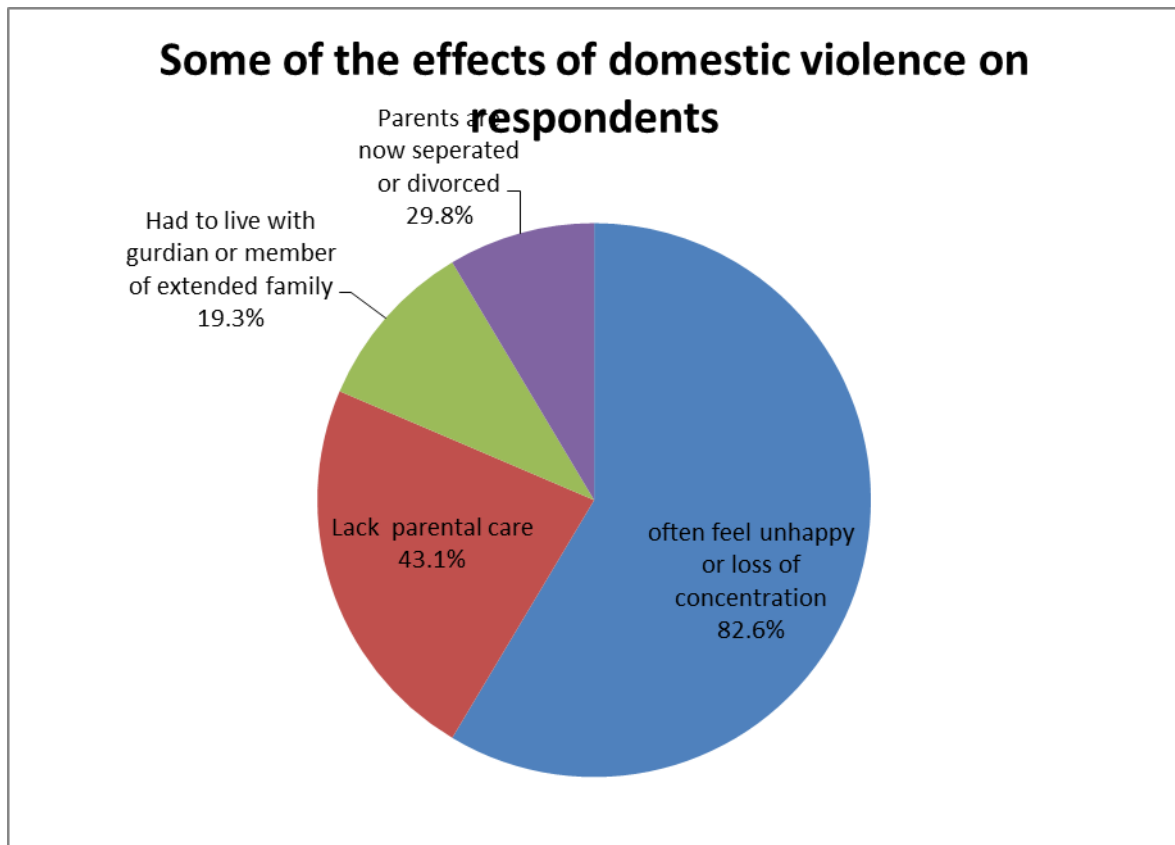
Variable	Response	Frequency (150)	Percentage (100%)
Have you ever been physically hurt during fight between your parents	Yes	23	15.3
	No	127	84.6
Have you ever encountered any form of danger due to fight between your parents	Yes	63	42
	No	87	58
Do you think you lack some good thing(s) as a result of fight between your parents	Yes	128	85.3
	No	22	14.6

Source: Researcher's survey, 2014.

From the above table, the respondents were asked whether they had been physically hurt or injured during fight between parents. Over 15% of the respondents indicated to have been physically hurt in the process of chaos or violence in their households. One could then argue that this figure is alarming especially when considering the total population of the sampled respondents (150), it further suggests that a number of children in families where violence occur are being affected in different forms. Importantly, when the respondents were asked whether they have encountered any form of danger due to fights between their parents, a total of 42% of the young people signified to have been in danger. Although due to the structured nature of this research instrument adopted for this study, the extent and various forms of dangers encountered

were not unfold by respondents, however a further probe about how domestic violence have affected the young people reveal that over 80% of the sampled respondents are being denied access to, or lack basic necessities due to quarrels or occurrence of violence between their parents. In addition, as indicated in the above table, 27.3% of the respondents now live under single parenting, about 19 % now reside with members of extended family or guardian due to parents disagreements, 41.3% indicated that they lacked adequate parental care, about 32% indicated financial stress on them as a consequence of chaos between their parents with a considerable number of respondents (82.6%) signifying not being happy or often suffer loss of concentration whenever they remember the issue of violence occurrence in their families.

Chart 1.0:



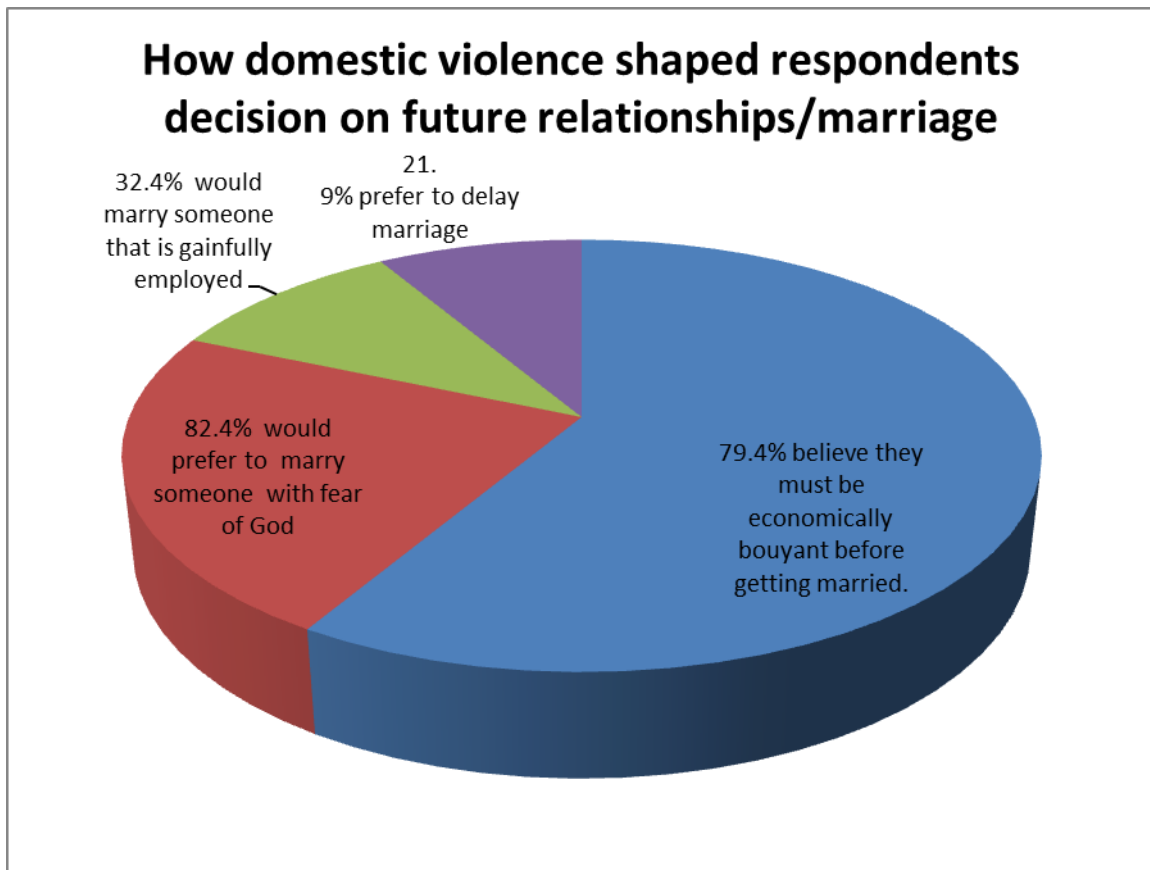
Source: Researcher's survey, 2014

The above 1.0 shows the percentage of respondents based on the ways in which domestic violence has affected them. At this point it is important to mention that some of the respondents are affected by more than one of the different dimensions highlighted above. Thus, while about 82.6% of the total sample indicated that they were often unhappy or lose concentration in their different endeavours whenever they remembered this existing problem, a relatively large number of them (43.1%) also stated that they lacked adequate parental care due to disagreement and crisis occurring between their parents... In similar to this finding, other studies have found that children that have been exposed to violent acts are more vulnerable to feelings of emotional trauma and loss of

confidence and self-esteem (Izugbara et al, 2008; Herrenkohl et al., 2008).

In addition, about 19.3% of the respondents attest to the fact that they now reside with guardians or members of extended family while almost 30% reveal that their parents are currently separated or divorced. Due to the structured nature of the instrument adopted for this study, it was impossible to explore in-depth the specific circumstances that resulted in the young people's relocation to members of extended family or the extent of disagreement or violent acts that led to their parents' separation or divorce. However, this study is important as it reveals some important implications of domestic violence on the sampled young people.

Chart 2.0



Source: Researcher's survey, 2014

Finally, when the respondents were asked about their future plans and how they would avoid crisis or violence in their marriages, the above chart presents statistics of their responses which speak volumes of how exposure to domestic violence has affected a number of them especially as regards to what they construct as prerequisites in their decisions in choosing a life partner. First, a majority of the respondents (nearly 80%) believe they must be economically buoyant before settling down in marriage. Unsurprisingly, a number of respondents (32.4%) indicated that their choice of life partner would be based on whether they have a secured employment or jobs that would meet their financial needs. Such finding suggests that the young people understood financial stress as a root cause of disagreement, crisis and subsequent violence among couples.

Second, a majority (over 82%) of the sampled young people opined to marry someone that has the 'fear of God'. This finding corroborates the fact that majority of respondents belong to one form of religious group where followers are being guided or admonished through their religious doctrines on 'appropriate norms and positive behaviours' that could enhance peaceful marriage.

Third, it was further observed that a percentage of respondents (21.9%) considered the need to delay getting married based on their understanding of marriage as less pleasurable and the fear of confronting similar violence that they had witnessed during their childhood. Moreover, several studies have indicated that one of the risks associated with children's exposure to violence is that they often have difficulties in adjusting to normal kind of relationships in their adulthood (Charlette et al., 2012). In addition, such children

have been identified with increased risks of encountering problematic relationships such as marital conflict, marital instability, and may develop psychological distress which may include self directed violence, physical fighting and intimate partner violence as victims or perpetrators (Sternberg et al., 2006; Finkelhor et al., 2007; Holt et al., 2007; Flaherty et al., 2009; Richmond et al., 2009; Elliott et al., 2009; Duke et al., 2010; Turner et al., 2010).

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This article contributes to the understanding of the effects of domestic violence on young people witnessing it within family settings. It attempted to answer specific questions about what the young people understand about domestic violence. Whether they have experienced or witnessed any form of violence? And how such experiences have shaped the various aspects of their lives.

This study concludes with a number of interesting findings. First, it was found that most young people in the study setting construct domestic violence with negative connotations. Majority viewed domestic violence as "very bad", "inhuman" and a "demonstration of hatred to one's spouse".

Second, it is evident from this study that most respondents have witnessed one form of domestic violence in their households. The major forms of violence that the young people attested to have witnessed are mainly perpetrated by the male partners, these include physical attack of wife, damaging or throwing out wife's property and causing physical hurts on the female partner. Only a few acknowledged husband battering as a form of domestic violence they have witnessed.

Third, most of the young people considered economic capacities or having a stable personal income as a way of avoiding violence in their future relationships. This suggests that the young people view family income or financial strains as a causal factor for domestic violence. Thus, their decisions and choices of what they considered important in a marriageable partner were narrowed to socio-economic stability rather than the pleasures or shared emotions that exist in an intimate relationship.

Fourth, this study found social learning theory to be relevant to findings from the study. For instance, the theory analyzes the role of socialization with variables such as attention, retention, reproduction and motivation as to what is observable (such as domestic violence). This explains the processes through which violence could be learnt and practiced by exposed children. In relating to this theory, it can be observed that the witnessing of violence in a relationship as a child can have lasting effects on children in adulthood. As can be observed in this study, the young people's experiences appeared to have influenced many aspects of their lives. For instance, a large number of young people in this setting do not focus on the affection, love or pleasure that accomplish intimate relationships, rather, their attention were focused on the circumstances that could lead to, or avoidance of violence in their future relationships.

Finally, this study affirms that domestic violence is indeed a social problem in Nigeria and most importantly among the growing young people in family settings. To reduce domestic violence, communities, religious groups, government and other institutions need to be duly involved. These institutions need to organize seminars, where trained counselors or professionals communities, religious groups, government and other institutions can help in propagating anti- domestic violence campaign and enlightenment programmes that discourage violence within the family institution.

Government should establish and fund counseling centers at the local, state, federal levels and employ professionals to assist or provide possible rehabilitation for victims and perpetrators of domestic violence.

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