ABSTRACT

The study examined the effects of domestic violence on girl-child educational achievement in primary schools in Jos-South Local Government Area of Plateau State. The population for the study comprised all girl children (female pupils) in primaries five and six who have low academic achievement as a result of domestic violence. The sample size consisted of 60 (sixty) female pupils of 30 each for experimental and control groups. One objective and one research question guided the study. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested. The study adopted quasi-experimental pre-test, post-test control group design. The result revealed that domestic violence against children negatively affects the education of the girl-child. The intervention was effective in mitigating the effects of domestic violence on the girl-child’s education. Creation of parental awareness of children’s rights was among recommended prevention measures for domestic violence.

Keywords: Domestic violence, Girl-child, Educational achievement, Primary schools

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence refers to any controlling abusive behaviour that harms the health or safety of the victim and includes physical, sexual, emotional, economic abuse, intimidation and harassment. Domestic violence against women has been a rising global concern as it is recognized as a worldwide phenomenon crossing the boundaries of countries, cultures, religious, social and economic spheres. Developing countries of the world have a relatively higher number of women experiencing domestic violence from intimate partners and in-laws (Naved & Persson, 2005). Violence against women has severe physical, emotional, mental and social consequences, thus, it is increasingly treated as a threat to human rights.
Levine in Ingyoroko (2011) perceives domestic violence as a social problem brought about by or reflective of a break-down in the moral structure of the family. The focus here is majorly wife battering. Interest in the effects of domestic violence began with concern for the direct victims of domestic violence, that is, battered spouses. Recently, however, some scholars have become concerned and interested in the effects that spousal battery could have on the children who may or may not be directly involved in the violence.

A basic characteristic of many societies is that the relation between men and women is essentially a power-relation in which women have less power than men. Nigeria is one of such societies where women lack the ability or power to shape their own lives and carry through any meaningful social or political projects without having to adjust their lives so as to accommodate men’s personal projects. Evidence from all regions of the world reveals that irrespective of any other factor, women actually encounter violence in the home as well as sexual assault and harassment or intimidation at work. One can therefore conclude that domestic violence is a subordinate position against a woman’s will. It feeds on the subordinate position into which women are placed in society owing to their economic disempowerment. Domestic violence is an expression of oppression and harassment which has its root deep in the concept of the relation between men and women.

Domestic violence is perceived as those premeditated actions and activities that cause physical, psychological, and social harm to a person just because of gender difference and it is domiciled in the family (Ityavyar, 2004). Women, children and youth are either direct or indirect victims of domestic violence. Estimates have shown that as many as 275 million children, including the girl-child, are exposed to domestic violence worldwide (WHO, 2005; Offorma, 2010). Carlson (2000) estimates that 10 to 20 percent of children are at risk of exposure to domestic violence. UNICEF (2006) also estimates the rate of child exposure to domestic violence as 30 to 60 percent. Research has indicated that domestic violence cuts across racial, socio-economic, educational, occupational and religious backgrounds. It further revealed that countless children including girl-children from these diverse backgrounds are exposed to domestic violence with negative impacts. This impact pervades all stages of life. Domestic violence is a paradox because it occurs in the family, a place where members ought to experience greater psycho-social adjustment and emotional support. It is ironical therefore, that this very supportive social unit is also the arena where violence is experienced, especially in urban slums with untold suffering to the partners involved and their children, especially the girl-child. Children who witness violence between their parents face increased risk for such emotional and behavioural problems as anxiety, depression, poor academic achievement, low
self-esteem, disobedience, nightmares and physical health complaints. All of these risks also affect academic achievement and school participation. Dickson and Larning (2005) conceptualised domestic violence as any act carried out with the intention to physically, socially, economically and psychologically hurt another member or members of a family regardless of age or gender. By this, domestic violence does harm to all victims, be they parents, spouses or children.

The causes of domestic violence, according to relevant literature, are varied. They include: intergenerational cycle of violence, excessive dependence on the abuser, substance abuse and jealousy. Kanchipulu and Mwale (2016) in a study of effects of domestic violence on children’s education in Malawi, suggested powerless status of children, poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, child’s misbehaviour, jealousy and parents’ ignorance, as causes of domestic violence. Gordon (2002) also identified drug abuse and alcoholism, poverty, age and gender as further causes of domestic violence. Worldwide studies identify a consistent list of events that are said to trigger violence. These include: not obeying husbands, talking back to husbands, not having food ready on time, failing to care adequately for the home, and questioning husbands about money or girlfriends. Others are going places without permission, refusing sex, or expressing suspicions of infidelity. All these mentioned events can lead to anger, then to aggression as a result of frustration.

Domestic violence also known as domestic abuse, intimate partner violence or abuse may start when one partner feels the need to control and dominate the other. Abusers may feel the need to control their partner because of low self-esteem, extreme jealousy, difficulties in regulating anger and other strong emotions, or when they feel inferior to the other partner in education and socioeconomic background or placement.

Some people with very traditional beliefs, may think they have the right to control their partners, and that women are not equal to men. Others may have undiagnosed personality or psychological disorders, still others may have learned this behaviour from growing up in a household where domestic violence was accepted as a normal part of family life (Goldsmith, 2018).

A partner’s domination may take the form of emotional, physical or sexual abuse. Studies such as Goldsmith (2018) suggest that violent behaviour often is caused by an interaction of situational and individual factors. That means family, people in the community and other cultural influences. Abusers may have seen violence often or they may have been victims themselves. Some abusers acknowledge growing up having been abused as children (Goldsmith, 2018).
Children who witness or are victims of violence may learn to believe that violence is a reasonable way to resolve conflict between people. Boys who learn that women are not to be valued or respected and who see violence directed against women are more likely to abuse women when they grow up. Girls who witness domestic violence in their families of origin are also more likely to be victimized by their own husbands. Although women are most often the victims of domestic violence, the gender roles are reversed sometimes. Alcohol and drugs may also contribute to violent behaviour. A drunk or ‘high’ person will be less likely to control his or her violent impulses toward a partner, so keeping such drinking or drug use episodes to a minimum may be of value for a person in an abusive relationship. No cause of domestic violence, however, justifies the actions of the abuser, nor should it be used as a rationale for abusive behaviour. These possible causes are only to better understand why an abuser believes it is acceptable to abuse a partner physically, sexually, psychologically or emotionally. Ultimately, abusers need to get help for their unhealthy and destructive behaviour or else they will find themselves living a solitary and lonely life.

Types of domestic violence identified from literature are: physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, economic, verbal and non-verbal. Others include: beatings, insults, shouts, ignoring, denying food, sexual harassment, destruction of a child’s personal property, threats and humiliation, among others. Violence includes: methodical use of threats, exploitation, and physical violence, sexual, verbal, and psychological attacks (WHO, 2005). Through these sorts of violence, abusers aim to instil fear in and dominate over their partners and to take control of the family environment. The World Health Organization (2009) identifies higher prevalence rates of domestic violence within societies that embrace traditional gender norms. That is, those that ensure a lack of autonomy for women and where there are restrictive laws on divorce, suggesting that this form of violence emerges from a male dominated domain.

Researchers, such as Raistit, Renaly, Yernec, Lesieur, Parizot and Chauvin (2009), suggest that domestic violence can have both short and long term effects on the psychological, mental and social functioning of an individual. According to NCCD (2009), domestic violence is both differential yet potentially deleterious for all children as reflected in high levels of cognitive, behavioural and social problems for some children, while leaving others relatively unscathed. Kanchiputu and Mwale (2016) found that impacts of domestic violence in a learning environment include:

1. Students’ ability to learn may be compromised because of exposure to domestic violence.
2. Students (girl-child) may bring worries and fears into the classroom.
3. Victims may be distracted, miss hearing positive statements made by teachers and friends, and may pay more attention to negative responses.

4. Students may be impulsive, distractible, or withdrawn.

5. Use of violence in school or in the community.

6. Become abusers in their own relationships later in life.

7. Use of drugs, and

8. Commit crimes, especially sexual assault.

The impact of domestic violence on the girl-child goes beyond the learning environment. Domestic violence such as beatings, insults, shouts, ignoring, denying food, sexual harassment, destruction of child personal property, threats and humiliation, among others, may result in psychological harm, emotional harm, physical pain or injury, low self-confidence and lack of self-esteem on the girl-child (Kanchiputu & Mwale, 2016). These states of affairs have great negative impact on the girl-child’s learning process since it affects the well being of the victimised child. Domestic violence affects the girl-child’s education in the sense that the abused child can lose interest in education. It sometimes causes the victimized child to arrive late at school, because of excessive house chores. Child abuse such as excessive labour, verbal aggression, food denial and physical harm can also result in a victimized child being absent from school. Furthermore, it may cause a girl-child to drop-out of school or change school. Domestic violence can further force a girl-child into early marriage. Many studies focused on the forms and prevalence of domestic violence and its effects on children’s well-being. Others partially touched the physical, psychological, health, economic and social life of women. Yet others dealt with the emotional and behavioural problems of domestic violence on children victims. This present study examined the effects of domestic violence on the girl-child’s education, knowing fully its impacts on the girl-child’s interest in learning and concentration level.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The following research question guided the study:

1. What is the mean rating of effect of domestic violence on girl-child educational achievement in primary schools in Jos South Local Government Area?

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in mean ratings between pre-test of experimental and control groups (female pupils) exposed to domestic violence.
2. There is no significant difference in mean ratings between post-test of experimental and control groups (female pupils) exposed to domestic violence.

**METHODOLOGY**

The researchers used quasi-experimental design, involving the use of pretest and posttest. The pretest was used to establish the equivalence effects of exposure to domestic violence on girl-child educational achievement in primary schools, while post test was used to find out the effectiveness of treatment on the group.

The population for the study comprised all female primary school pupils exposed to domestic violence either in the past or in the present.

Two schools out of one hundred and ninety primary schools in Jos South Local Government Area were randomly selected. The total population of the pupils from the sample schools stood at 220. The sample size of sixty (60) subjects were used for the study. These subjects were purposively selected and distributed into control and experimental groups (treatment).

A self-constructed questionnaire titled “Effects of Domestic Violence on Girl-Child Educational Development in Primary Schools” (EDVGCEDPS) was used to measure the effects of domestic violence on their educational achievements. Female pupils of primaries 5 and 6 were used for the study. Counselling sessions were also done to establish the fact that the pupils actually were exposed to domestic violence. After treatment sessions of ten weeks, post test was administered. The data collected were analysed using inferential statistics. Mean rating and standard deviation were used to answer the research question while independent t-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance of pre-test and post-test scores.

**RESULTS**

**Research Question One:** What is the mean rating of the effect of domestic violence on girl-child educational achievement in primary schools in Jos South Local Government Area?

**Table 1: Mean Score Between Experimental Group and Control Group on the Effect of Domestic Violence On Girl-Child Educational Achievement in Primary Schools in Jos South Local Government Area**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x̄</td>
<td>Std</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29.60</td>
<td>4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>63.84</td>
<td>11.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 indicates that the experimental group had higher mean scores (29.60, std= 4.11) than the control group (63.84, Std=11.05) at post test. There was also an increase in the control
group’s mean scores of 63.84 to 30.36 because the participants might have changed or reduced their fears with the placebo engagement.

**Hypotheses**

**Ho1**: There is no significant difference in mean ratings between pre-test of experimental and control groups of girl-child exposed to domestic violence.

**Table 2: Independent t-test Statistics on Difference in Mean Ratings Between Pre-Test of Experimental (Treatment) Group and Control Group of Girl-Child Exposed to Domestic Violence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(\bar{x})</th>
<th>Std</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>t-call</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control group</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29.60</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment group</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>63.84</td>
<td>11.05</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total group</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Result of the independent t-test statistics revealed a significant difference in mean ratings between pre-test scores of treatment and control groups of girl-children exposed to domestic violence. It was observed that the calculated p value of 0.019 was found to be lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance while the t-calculated value of 6.19 is higher than the 2.045 t-critical at df 29. There were also differences in mean scores of 29.60 and 63.84 between treatment and control groups. This implied a mean gain difference of 34.24 in favour of the treatment group. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in mean ratings between pre-test score of treatment and control groups of girl-children exposed to domestic violence is hereby rejected.

**Hypothesis Two**: There is no significant difference in mean ratings between post-test score of experimental and control groups of girl-children exposed to domestic violence.

**Table 3: Independent t-test Statistics on Difference in Mean Ratings Between Post Test Scores of Experimental Group and Control Group of Girl-Children Exposed to Domestic Violence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(\bar{x})</th>
<th>Std</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>t-cal</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>63.84</td>
<td>11.05</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7.21</td>
<td>0.0074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30.36</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Result of the independent t-test statistics revealed significant difference in mean ratings between post test scores of experimental group and control group of girl-children exposed to domestic violence. It was observed that the calculated p value of 0.0074 was lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance while the t-calculated value of 7.21 is higher than 2.045 t-critical at df 29. The mean scores were 63.84 and 30.36 by those participants who were exposed to treatment and those in the control group respectively. This implies a mean gain difference
of 33.48 in favour of the treatment group, showing that the participants who were exposed to treatment had significantly higher scores than those who were in the control group. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings between post-test scores of experimental and control groups of girl-children exposed to domestic violence is hereby rejected.

DISCUSSION

The results in tables 1 and 2 revealed that subjects exposed to domestic violence suffer from psychological and emotional harm, physical pain, lack of self confidence and lack of self esteem. All these have great negative impact on their learning process since it affects the well-being of the girl-child. The finding is in line with that of Kanchipulu and Mwale (2016) who are of the opinion that domestic violence costs the girl-child emotional, psychological and physical well-being which shifts the victim’s focus from education to a worrisome state. They further reported that domestic violence causes the girl-child to be late to or absent from school. The present study also found out that exposure to domestic violence makes the girl-child lose interest in education or to opt for early marriage. This is also in agreement with the findings of Sekhon (2014) who attested to early marriage of the girl-child as a result of domestic violence.

The finding in table 3 further revealed significant indifference in mean rating between post test and control groups of female pupils exposed to domestic violence. This meant that counselling had significant effect on the victims of domestic violence in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State. This also means that the rate of reduction in fears was greater among group members that were given treatment, than the control group. These findings are in agreement with the postulations of Nkaneme and Ngwoke (2010), that behaviour (irrational beliefs and mindsets) are passively acquired. Therefore, when one is made to actively examine the basis of such beliefs, one would most likely refute such beliefs. Direct confrontation with reality and alternative explanation would generally erode the foundation of such primordial beliefs and lead to a change in disposition or forming new habits of quitting fears of domestic violence.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

1. A client who has been involved in abuse has been traumatized, and discussions about the abusive situation can trigger PTSD-like symptoms. Counsellors should talk through to the clients’ emotions, use trauma-informed care and allow the client to control the pace of therapy.

2. Counsellors at all levels of education should help the girl-child to understand herself and deal with the social, behavioural and personal trauma/problems. The counsellors
should concentrate on preventive and developmental counseling by providing the girl-child with life skills needed to deal with problems before they occur and to enhance personal, social and academic growth and rehabilitate the victims or the traumatised.

3. Treating the family as a whole when possible. This allows counselors and other helping professionals to focus on relationship patterns and behaviours and to begin addressing these problem areas more effectively. Family therapy can be a major source of healing and insight.

4. Cognitive behaviour therapy – talking through these clients’ belief systems, particularly their beliefs about interpersonal issues and relationship. Counsellors should therefore develop strategies to help these clients regulate their feelings, such as learning coping skills that will aid them in calming down and working through their sadness, anger or anxiety in a positive way.

5. Counsellors should provide special services by identifying cases involving domestic abuse, and other family problems that can affect the child’s development. Counselors should work with the victims individually or in small or large groups with same problems.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION TIPS

- Watch for personality changes such as more aggressive, violent, moody or accusing behaviour.
- Develop a plan of action and instruct your children about the plan.
- Locate a safe house such as the home of a trusted friend, trusted neighbour of family member
- Locate a safe shelter that is suitable to your needs and accept children if necessary and
- Seek counselling assistance.

CONCLUSION

Domestic violence occurs in every culture, country and age group. It affects people from all socioeconomic, educational and religious backgrounds. There are under reported cases of domestic violence against the girl-child. Domestic violence inflicts harm on the girl-child such as emotional and psychological harm, physical pain and low self-esteem which negatively impact the child’s learning thereby influencing her to lose interest in education, arrive late at school, be absent from school, drop out of school and even desire early marriage. All these make the learning ability of the girl-child to be compromised. The girl-child may bring worries and fears into the classroom. She may further be distracted, and pay more attention to negative
statements made by teachers and friends but counselling if and when properly done, can be a way out.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Counsellors should endeavour to educate parents on girl-child rights in order to prevent domestic violence against them. This is because sensitization of parents on the girl-child rights can give them dignity as adults and further influence adults to change their bad parental styles to safe ones.

2. Counsellors should encourage the community to have a place where victims of domestic violence can go to seek help. In this case, local leaders or community leaders should be encouraged to formulate byelaws aiming at preventing domestic violence against the girl-child.

3. Federal government should develop and implement comprehensive policies, plan of action and programmes for the survivors’ protection, development and advancement of the girl-child to promote and protect the full enjoyment of her human rights and to ensure equal opportunities for her; these plans should form an intergral part of the total development process.

4. Perpetrators of domestic violence against the girl-child should be arrested by the police. Police suggestion boxes should be introduced in communities so that victims of domestic violence would throw in their concerns.

5. Community counselling should be encouraged. Parents should be held accountable to their children against domestic violence.

6. All stakeholders in preventing violence at home should ensure the victims are protected and desensitized of the trauma, the counselling services be provided before, during and after the marriage empowerment training for women to be self-reliant.

REFERENCES


