

Causes of Violence among Couples In Makurdi Metropolis Of Benue State, Nigeria

Dr. James, P. O. &¹ Dr. Ako, J. A., Adamu, Ruth Y.

^{1 & 2} Department of Educational Foundations and General Studies, University of Agriculture, Makurdi
Corresponding Author: Dr. (Mrs.) James

Abstract: *The study looked at causes of violence among couples in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State, Nigeria. Two research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. Survey design was adopted for the study. 50 male and 50 female civil servants purposively selected formed the sample for the study. A self-developed instrument named "Causes of Violence among Couples Questionnaire" (CVCQ) was used to collect data. Mean and t-test were used to answer the research questions and for testing the null hypothesis respectively. Result shows that all the factors on the instrument often lead to violence with means above 2.50. Nagging, sexual deprivation, dishonesty, infidelity and neglect of responsibility emerged as the top five common causes of violence. The t-test yield 0.80 and as such, the hypothesis of no significant gender difference in perception of causes of violence is accepted. Based on the findings, the researchers recommend among others that, issues of conflict should be well managed to avoid or at least minimize incidence of violence and couples should identify their responsibilities and take them seriously.*

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I. Introduction

Violence is a universal phenomenon. It is prevalent across social classes, age, religion, ethnicity/races and geographical settings. The World Health Organisation (WHO, 1996) defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threat or action against oneself, another person or against a group or community that either results in or has high likelihood of mal-development or deprivation. Violence often result from conflicts which are bound to occur in all human relationships due to misconceptions and differences in expectations.

Conflict is a form of friction, disagreement or discord arising within a group when the beliefs or actions of one or more members of the group are unacceptable to one or more members of another group. It is a condition of disharmony within an interaction process, which usually occurs as a result of clash of interests between the parties involved in some form of relationship. Conflicts are normal features of healthy relationship because, if well managed, they help to keep the relationship strong and growing but if they are mismanaged or unresolved, they could lead to violence.

Violence occurs in form of physical, emotional and sexual abuses. It is sometimes employed as a tool for correction or punishment. For instance, a rude child may have to be beaten up or denied some privileges to call him to order so that the same act does not repeat itself. On a general note, violence occurs among spouses, children, relatives, in-laws and families. Violence against children by parents, caregivers and siblings is common and widely accepted practice in Nigeria especially as a form of discipline.

Although violence among couples is less frequent in the Nigerian culture than it is towards children, it does occur in many homes. The researchers have also observed that, whatever the nature of violence, the females are almost always the victims while men remain the perpetrators. According to Jjaden and Theonnes, cited in Umwani, Uwadiae and Agbontaen-Eghafona (2009), a survey by National Institute of Justice and Centre for Disease Control and Prevention in USA showed that women are significantly more likely to be assaulted by an intimate partner than men. Men are also said to be victims of various forms of violence but the difference is, while men tend to be attacked and killed by strangers or casual acquaintances, women are most at risk at home or society with men and other family members they trust.

According to Effah-Chukwuma and Osarenren (2001), Nigerian women are beaten, raped and murdered on daily basis for diverse reasons. There are no universally known causes of violence in homes. This is probably because cultures differ and families vary in their reactions to issues of interpersonal concerns.

II. Literature Review

Every marital union is surrounded with and influenced by certain pressures of both internal and external sources. In other words, every association between two or more people as is the case in marriage goes through some forms of crises. The causes of crises or conflicts that lead to violence among couples have been identified by many authors.

Nadir (2003) identified religion incompatibility, finance problems, cultural differences and unsatisfactory sexual relationship as sources of conflict for couples. Akinade (1997) highlights financial security, infidelity, sex, privacy, lying, in-laws, friends and children as common sources of marital problems.

In a study by Alumana, as cited in Omoregbe, Obetoh and Odion (2010), refusal of wives to submit to their husbands' authority, sexual misconduct by wives, interference by in-laws, religious conflicts, flirtation by male partners, inability of husbands to live up to their responsibilities were found to be the causes of domestic violence. Other sources of violence according to Amato and Rogers (1997) and Amadi and Amadi (2014) include poor communication, gossiping and nagging while barrenness (also known as childlessness) were reported as source of conflict in families (Roger, 2004).

In a related research, Amato and Previti (2003) found that drinking and becoming irresponsible are causes of conflict that could lead to violence. Mbwinine (2017) also reported that less or no respect among couples, less sex, less confidence, less mutual decision making and less or no sharing of thoughts cause conflicts and violence among couples.

The list of causes of violence in families seems endless or in-exhaustive and they constitute major threats to peaceful union. Two or more authors use different names to the causes. For instance; sexual deprivation, less or no sex and unsatisfactory sexual relationship; Barrenness and Childlessness; Religion conflict and Religion incompatibility; among other pairs of words refer to the same things. When these issues arising from interpersonal concerns are not properly handled, they cause friction, conflict and violence that may lead to separation.

The effects of violence on victims, other members of the family and the society can be as numerous as the causes. In its various forms, unresolved conflicts and the resultant violence have devastating effects on members of affected families and the society. Those who experience or witness violence are likely to have sense of insecurity; children in particular may have poor upbringing while others develop fear for marriage when they later come of age. Violence in homes no doubt disrupts family unity, harmony and cooperation. It also retards in the long run, the progress of individuals and families. Akume, Amali and Ojogbane (2008) posit that parents who fight, quarrel and are snobbish towards each other will raise children that will grow up to be rude, violent and generally indisciplined in their lives. In support of this, Wilma and Allen (2000) say that there is a natural tendency to blame children's misbehaviour on parental mismanagement or family disintegration.

This paper investigates the causes of violence among couples and attempts to employ counselling interventions that will help reduce incidence of violence and its effects on Nigerian families particularly children who are also future parents.

Research Questions

1. What are the common causes of violence among couples?
2. How do perceived causes of violence differ among males and females?

Hypothesis

There is no significant gender difference in perception of causes of violence among couples.

III. Methodology

The study adopted the survey design because the concern of the researchers was existing characteristics of the subjects and variables of the study. No variable was manipulated in the study. Population of the study comprise all married male and female civil servants in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State. 50 male and 50 female civil servants were selected to respond to the instrument (only those that were willing to provide needed information took part in the study).

Instrument for Data Collection

A self-developed instrument; "Causes of Violence among Couples Questionnaire (CVCQ) was used to elicit information from respondents. Respondents were requested to indicate how often the factors listed lead to violence among couples. Response options range are, Never, Seldom, Often and Very Often with the values of 1, 2, 3, 4, respectively. The researchers distributed the instrument to subjects in their offices and retrieved them after they were completed. Mean and t-test were used to answer research questions and test the null hypothesis respectively.

IV. Results

Results of the data analysis is presented on the Tables below

Table 1: Ranking of causes of violence among couples

S / N	I t e m s	M e a n s
1	. F i n a n c e / M o n e y	3 . 3 7
2	. S e x u a l D e p r i v a t i o n	3 . 3 6
3	. I n f i d e l i t y	3 . 3 2
4	. D i s h o n e s t y	3 . 3 1
5	. N e g l e c t o f r e s p o n s i b i l i t y	3 . 2 4
6	. I n e q u i t y i n p o l y g a m o u s h o m e s	3 . 2 2
7	. L a c k o f r e s p e c t	3 . 2 1
8	. R u d e n e s s	3 . 2 1
9	. I n f l u e n c e o f d r u g s / a l c o h o l	3 . 2 1
1 0	. A c t o f i n c e s t i n t h e f a m i l y	3 . 2 0
1 1	. N a g g i n g	3 . 1 9
1 2	. L a c k o f u n d e r s t a n d i n g	3 . 1 9
1 3	. A r g u m e n t s	3 . 1 5
1 4	. B e t r a y a l	3 . 1 5
1 5	. G o i n g p l a c e s w i t h o u t p a r t n e r s c o n s e n t	3 . 1 2
1 6	. I n f l u e n c e o f i n - l a w s	3 . 0 8
1 7	. I n f l u e n c e o f o u t s i d e r s	3 . 0 7
1 8	. M a t e r i a l c o n c e r n / p r o p e r t y	3 . 0 3
1 9	. G o s s i p i n g	3 . 0 3
2 0	. C h i l d l e s s n e s s	3 . 0 2
2 1	. S u s p i c i o n	3 . 0 1
2 2	. A c t o f w i t c h c r a f t	3 . 0 0
2 3	. M a r i t a l r a p e	2 . 9 9
2 4	. O v e r d e m a n d i n g a t t i t u d e	2 . 9 9
2 5	. R e l i g i o u s A f f i l i a t i o n	2 . 7 3
	G r a n d M e a n	3 . 1 4

Table 1 shows the ranking of common causes of violence among couples. These causes as perceived by all the respondents are arranged in descending order based on the mean scores derived. From the results, Finance (3.37), Sexual deprivation (3.36), Infidelity (3.32), Dishonesty (3.31) and neglect of responsibility (3.24) are the top five common causes of violence. They are followed by others as seen on Table 1. On a general note, all the factors presented in the instrument often cause violence among couples because, the mean scores for all the items are above the benchmark of 2.50. The grand mean is 3.14 which is far above 2.50.

Table 2: Perception of causes of violence among couples by Gender

S/N	I t e m s	M e a n	
		M a l e	F e m a l e
1	. F i n a n c e / M o n e y	3 . 1 6	3 . 5 8
2	. N a g g i n g	3 . 0 8	3 . 3 0
3	. A r g u m e n t s	3 . 1 4	3 . 1 6
4	. C h i l d l e s s n e s s	2 . 8 2	3 . 2 2
5	. I n f l u e n c e o f i n - l a w s	3 . 0 4	3 . 1 2
6	. I n f l u e n c e o f o u t s i d e r s	3 . 1 8	2 . 9 6
7	. L a c k o f r e s p e c t	3 . 2 8	3 . 1 4
8	. D i s h o n e s t y	3 . 3 2	3 . 3 0
9	. N e g l e c t o f r e s p o n s i b i l i t y	3 . 0 8	3 . 4 0
10	. S e x u a l D e p r i v a t i o n	3 . 1 8	3 . 5 4
11	. M e n t a l r a p e	3 . 0 2	2 . 9 6
12	. R u d e n e s s	3 . 2 0	3 . 2 2
13	. I n f l u e n c e o f d r u g s / a l c o h o l	3 . 3 0	3 . 1 2
14	. I n f i d e l i t y	3 . 3 2	3 . 3 2
15	. B e t r a y a l	3 . 0 4	3 . 2 6
16	. L a c k o f u n d e r s t a n d i n g	3 . 2 0	3 . 1 8
17	. O v e r d e m a n d i n g a t t i t u d e	2 . 9 4	3 . 0 4
18	. S u s p i c i o n	2 . 9 6	3 . 0 6
19	. I n e q u i t y i n p o l y g a m o u s h o m e s	3 . 1 6	3 . 2 8
20	. M a t e r i a l c o n c e r n / p r o p e r t y	2 . 9 0	3 . 1 6
21	. G o i n g p l a c e s w i t h o u t p a r t n e r s c o n s e n t	3 . 0 6	3 . 1 8
22	. R e l i g i o u s A f f i l i a t i o n	2 . 6 2	2 . 8 4
23	. A c t o f i n c e s t i n t h e f a m i l y	3 . 1 4	3 . 2 6
24	. G o s s i p i n g	3 . 0 6	3 . 0 0
25	. A c t o f w i t c h c r a f t	2 . 9 8	3 . 0 6
	G r a n d M e a n	3 . 0 9	3 . 1 9

From the angle of males, dishonesty and infidelity each have mean of 3.32 and rank as highest cause of violence. These are followed by influence of drugs/alcohol (3.30), lack of respect (3.28), rudeness (3.20), lack of understanding (3.20), and sexual deprivation (3.18). Mean of 3.16 accounts for both inequity in polygamous homes and finances among the rest of the causes presented in Table 2.

The female category ranked finance (3.58) as highest source of conflict followed closely by sexual deprivation (3.54), neglect of responsibility (3.40), infidelity (3.32). Both nagging and dishonesty scored 3.30, inequity in polygamous homes scored 3.28 while betrayal and acts of incest in the family both scored mean of 3.26.

Both males and females identified infidelity, dishonesty, finance, inequity in polygamous homes and sexual deprivation as top causes of violence.

Hypothesis

Table 3: t-test of Gender difference in Perception of Causes of violence among couples

V a r i a b l e s	N	M e a n	S t d	D e v	t	p-value
M a l e s	5	3 . 0 9	0 . 1 6 2 5 7	9	8 2 . 0 9 2	0 . 8 0 0
F e m a l e s	5	3 . 1 9	0 . 1 7 2 5 0			
T o t a l	5	0				

Table 3 shows that the p-value of 0.800 is greater than 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female civil servants on their perception of the causes of violence among couples. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference is accepted

V. Discussion

In every relationship characterised by intimacy such as marriage, there are bound to be conflicting views and behaviour both of which can lead to violence if not well managed. The respondents in this study attested to the fact that marriage has many issues and they could cause violence.

A look at the results in Table 1 which is on the causes of violence shows that all the factors listed often lead to violence. A closer look at the items reveals that finance, sexual deprivation, infidelity, dishonesty and neglect of responsibility are the five top causes of violence among couples in Benue state. These are followed closely by inequity in polygamous homes, lack of respects, rudeness, influence of drugs/alcohol, acts of incest, nagging, lack of understanding, argument, betrayal and going places without consent of ones partner. Others are as found in the Table. All the factors covered by the instrument have their mean scores above the chosen benchmark of 2.50. The grand mean of 3.14 is also far above the decision rule of 2.50.

The result is in agreement with Nadir (2003) and Akinade (1997) who both found that sex and finance cause marital problems. In addition to these, Akinade (1997) highlighted infidelity, in-laws, friends and children. These friends are more or less outsiders but they can influence relationships positively or negatively.

The findings of this study also agrees with Alumanah whose study as cited in Omoregbe, Obetoh and Odion (2010) discovered that refusal of wives to submit to their husbands’ authority, sexual misconduct by wives, interference by in-laws, religious conflicts, flirtation by male partners and inability of husbands to live up to their responsibilities cause domestic violence either directly or indirectly. Another similarity between this study and previous findings are that poor communication, nagging and gossiping (Amadi and Amadi, 2014) and Childlessness (Rogers, 2004) cause conflict in families.

This study, like that of Amato and Previti (2007) found that drinking and becoming irresponsible cause violence. In the same vein, Mbwinine (2017) reported that less or no respect, less sex, less confidence, less mutual decision making and less or no sharing of thoughts cause conflict and violence among couples.

The list of causes of violence is inexhaustible as marriages differ all over the world. From literatures, it has been found that authors use different concepts or words to mean the same thing. For instance, barrenness and childlessness, religious conflict and religion incompatibility, sexual deprivation for less sex and unsatisfactory sexual relationship, infidelity and flirtation by male partners, among others.

A few of the causes identified by the present study were not found in the studies reviewed. However, they are sub-summed in those captured by the studies contacted. However, they are implied in those identified by both the previous studies and the present one. For instance, sexual deprivation or unsatisfactory sexual relationship identified by the studies can lead to incest within the family, marital rape and suspicion. Talking about poor communication (Amato and Rogers, 1997), it can be a strong reason for lack of understanding. When couples resort to guessing and assuming the intentions of their spouses for behaviour they put up and what they say, it could mark the beginning of crises. The existence of crises often attracts intervention or intrusion of third party supporters among whom are relatives (including in-laws) and friends.

Amato and Previti (2003) believed that troubles with in-laws and relatives are common particularly when spouse remains reliant on his/her parents for riches or emotional support. The way couples sometimes seek comfort and advice from relatives makes them develop new interests and grow in diverging directions. The

western culture of labelling families as nuclear and extended is not acceptable to African communities. To this end, whether a son is married, he remains an important member of his family and community and by implication an endless chain of relatives.

An individual who drinks alcohol to the point of neglecting his responsibility is not worthy of respect from his spouse. There are also bound to be arguments over how the family money is spent. The drinking partner can never arrive at mutual decision with his partner as he may sneak out to drinking joints without informing his wife.

In all, the causes of violence identified by this study are interwoven or rather inseparable with one leading to another and couples must be sensitive for warning signs of crises and attend to them in the wisest ways possible.

VI. Conclusion

Violence emerges or ensues when two different people in an intimate relationship disagree over issues of common interest. The causes of marital conflicts and the violence that results from them are numerous. All the issues that lead to violence covered by the questionnaire were all found to be reasons for violence as indicated by the male and female civil servants (respondents). Finance, sexual deprivation, infidelity, dishonesty and neglect of responsibility were the top-ranked causes of violence. These were followed (in descending order) by inequity in polygamous homes, lack of respect, rudeness, influence of drug/alcohol, acts of incest and nagging among others.

After looking through the list of causes, the researchers understood that all the causes were linked, meaning each cause has the tendency to lead to another. A test of gender difference in perception of the factors that cause violence in families revealed that there was no significant gender difference in perception of causes of violence among couples in Benue State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommended that;

1. Intending couples should be exposed to pre-marital counselling which will help them to understand themselves and each other before marrying. By so doing, problems that are likely to occur in marriage are highlighted and the ways to manage them outlined.
2. While in marriage, couples need to attend seminars and workshops with conflict resolution and marital harmony as the themes
3. Guidance counselling services in schools should include pre-marital counselling for those that are mature enough for such
4. Marriage counsellors should be trained and posted to all establishments or organisations
5. Frequent and intense communication avail couples the opportunity to talk over matters that could degenerate into violence
6. Couples should as much as possible learn to solve their own problems at the budding stage rather than involving third parties, whose role can worsen the situation on ground
7. Everyone in a relationship as intimate as marriage needs to identify his/her responsibility and attend to it. Couple should deal honestly with themselves, respect each other and avoid arguments that are not constructive.
8. On a general note, prevention is said to be cheaper and better than cure. This means, couples should make efforts to take mutual decisions and work at avoiding violence which has effects on the stability of the relationship and the wellbeing of the entire family.

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