Influence of Domestic Violence on the Psychological Wellbeing of Adolescents in Imo State: Implication for Counseling

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study was to investigate influence of domestic violence on the psychological wellbeing of adolescents in Imo State: Implications for Counseling. Domestic violence is generally understood as any assault committed by a person who either shares a living arrangement with or is involved in an intimate relationship with the victim of the assault. Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive tactics that can include physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and emotional abuse, perpetrated by one person against an intimate partner, with the goal of establishing and maintaining power and control. Drug abuse, alcoholism, poverty, age and gender are the various causes of domestic violence. The forms of domestics violence includes; physical, emotional, sexual, social, financial and economic abuse. Conclusively, domestic violence exists in the community, and adolescents report that they do experience domestic violence in their homes; and adults report that sometimes adults mistreat adolescents in several ways. The study amongst others recommended that there should be clear procedures in the society for safeguarding adolescents based on a clear assessment of the adolescents’ needs, their parents’ capacity to provide for their needs and any wider environmental or family factors that may impact on their psychological wellbeing, there should be agreed inter-agency procedures for working with the adolescents, the victim and the perpetrator of the abuse, and there should be provision of therapeutic support services to adolescents who are domestically violated.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Psychological Wellbeing, Adolescents, Imo State

INTRODUCTION
Most contemporary scholars agree that domestic violence is one of the negative practices that mostly happen in households. Gordon (2002) described the term domestic violence as generally understood to apply to any assault committed by a person who either shares a living arrangement with or is involved in an intimate relationship with the victim of the assault. Domestic violence is a bad practice which can affect adolescents’ psychological wellbeing in one way or the other. Anyone can be a victim. Domestic violence can impact anyone regardless of their gender, race, age, culture or religion. However, most often women and children are the victims of domestic violence. Most studies focused on women as victims of domestic violence but this study dwelled on adolescents as victims of domestic violence (Edleson, 2007). It can occur in many forms including emotional abuse, psychological violence, neglect, physical assault, witnessing (exposure to) physical violence and sexual assault. Adolescents’ exposure to this form of violence has considerable potential to be perceived as life threatening by those victimized and leave them with a sense of vulnerability, hopelessness, psychological disorders and emotional threats. Which end up affecting their psychological wellbeing (Fantuzo & Mohr, 2009).
Domestic violence is common in male dominated cultures such as patrilineal and patriarchy cultures, as it is justified in customs and traditions, and condoned by law. Some of the domestic violence cases go unreported, since adolescents may suffer in silence (Newell, 2008). There are various reasons for lack of reporting, for example, young adolescents lack capacity to report, many adolescents are afraid of reprisals by perpetrators or interventions by the authorities that worsen their overall situation and parents, the primary protectors of adolescents, are in many cases also the perpetrators of violence and may remain silent if the violence is perpetrated by other family members or powerful members of the community or society.

Violence against adolescents in the home and family has been condemned by many organizations. For example, the United Nations signed a charter aimed at protecting children’s rights in 1989 and it is called the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (www.unicef.org/crc/). And African countries also took an initiative in protecting children rights, with the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), it is also called the Children’s Charter, adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1990.

Fantuzzo and Mohr (2009) conducted a study on the prevalence and effects of adolescents’ exposure to domestic violence. The study was carried through telephone surveys and questionnaires. They categorized crimes that pertain to domestic violence as include: assault offenses (aggravated assault, simple assault and intimidation), forcible rape and non-forcible rape, disorderly conduct and family offenses. They also said that adolescents exposed to domestic violence differ from nonviolent homes with respect to one or more aspects of adolescents’ functioning, including: externalizing behaviors (such as aggressive behaviour and conduct problems); internalizing behaviours (such as depression, anxiety and low self-esteem); intellectual and academic functioning; social development, and physical health and development. Another study conducted by African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) (2011) showed the prevalent of violence against children in different forms of physical, psychological and sexual violence and also the study found fathers or male relatives to be the most perpetrators of domestic violence (www.africanchildforum.org/site/.../ACPF-violence-against-children.pdf). But the study did not tackle the effects of the violence on the academic life of the victims (children).

**Forms of Domestic Violence against Adolescents**

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive tactics that can include physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and emotional abuse, perpetrated by one person against an intimate partner, with the goal of establishing and maintaining power and control (Lindon, 2008). Domestic Violence occurs in all kinds of intimate relationships, including married couples, people who are dating, couples who live together, people with children in common, same-sex partners, people who were formerly in a relationship with the person abusing them, and teen dating relationships. Abusive behaviors are not symptoms that someone is angry or out of control. An abuser makes a choice to exert power and control over his or her partner. Abusive behaviors include physical, emotional, sexual, social, and financial abuse (Naker, 2015).

**Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse often begins with less violent assaults such as pushing. As the abuse continues, however, it becomes increasingly violent. Abusers often target areas of the body that are usually covered with clothing because the injuries are less likely to be visible to others. Acts of physical abuse include: pushing, restraining, shaking, slapping, biting, punching, kicking, throwing objects at the victim, target hitting, sustained beating, abuse planned to cause the victim to miscarry, using weapons, strangulation, homicide (Munro, 2015)

**Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is a tool used by those who want to make their partners feel scared, crazy, worthless, or responsible for the abuse. The abuser's goal is control over the victim. Emotional abuse may include: making jokes about the victim, insults, criticizing the victim's competence, ignoring the victim's feelings, withholding affection as a form of punishment, blaming the victim
for all problems, yelling at the victim, humiliating the victim in front of others, accusing the victim of being the abusive partner, threatening to take the children away from the victim, threatening physical violence, threatening suicide to punish the victim (Mantell & Scragg, 2009)

**Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse is one of the least discussed, but most common, forms of domestic violence. Sexual abuse includes: sexual jokes that make the victim uncomfortable, treating women as sex objects, criticizing the victim's sexuality, using sexual jealousy as a tool of control, uncomfortable or unwanted touch, withholding sex as punishment, demanding sex, flaunting affairs, rape, sex after beatings, forcing the victim to witness or participate in sexual activity with others, sexually assaulting the victim in front of the children, sexual torture (Worrall, Boylan & Roberts, 2008).

**Social Abuse**

Social abuse is used to isolate the victim from others in the community. The fewer people the victim is connected with, the more control the abuser has over the victim. Examples of social abuse include: Insisting that the couple spend all time together, discouraging the victim from seeing friends or family, forbidding the victim to see friends or family, monitoring the victim's mail or phone calls, checking the odometer, restricting access to the car or car keys, telling others the victim is crazy or abusive (Mantell & Scragg, 2009).

**Financial Abuse**

Abusers often attempt to establish financial control over victims. Victims who are financially dependent on abusers have fewer resources for escape. Financial abuse includes: Making all financial decisions for the household, keeping financial secrets, monitoring the victim's spending, controlling the victim's access to cash, controlling the victim's access to checkbook or credit cards, refusing to let the victim work, forcing the victim to turn over income to the abuser.

**Economic abuse**

This involves making or attempting to make the victim financially dependent on the abuser. Examples of economic abuse include preventing or forbid ding an intimate partner from working or gaining and education, controlling the financial resources, and withholding access to economic resources. Not all forms of domestic violence are criminalized and, in fact, drafters of legislation are encouraged to consider limiting intervention to cases involving physical and sexual violence, the threat of such violence, and extreme acts of coercive control from which the victim cannot easily escape. While some countries include psychological and economic abuse in criminal law, doing so can create a risk that violent abusers will manipulate the system to enforce actions against their partner or to justify physical violence as an appropriate response to their partner’s insults.

**Causes of Domestic Violence against Adolescents**

Both groups of adolescents and adults gave various suggestions on the causes of domestic violence against adolescents in the households. Many adolescents reported powerless status of adolescents as the main cause of domestic violence against them in the households (Levendosky, Shapiro & Semel, 2003). Their low social status in the hierarchy of power in the society left adolescents prone to domestic violence. Thus, power based on parent-child relationship. Adolescents are being violated just because they are children. Secondly, respondents reported poverty as a cause of domestic violence against adolescents. They said that poor living conditions create pressure on the family and stress on the parenting of that family; this may lead to domestic violence. Thirdly, respondents reported drug and alcohol abuse as a cause of violence. They said drug and alcohol abuse may drive the drunkard on the creation of poor relationship between parents (or guardians) and adolescents, in the long run, this may lead to domestic violence against adolescents. Fourthly, respondents mentioned child’s misbehavior as a cause of domestic violence since adults may apply excessive punishment or rough treatment in order to put the bad behavior under control. Apart from the above points, respondents also mentioned other causes of domestic violence like jealousy and parent’s ignorance. Of these points, the highest reported
cause was powerless status of children and least reported was child’s misbehavior. These points concur with Stanley, Miller, Foster and Thomson (2009) who identified drug abuse and alcoholism, poverty, and age and gender as causes of domestic violence.

Consequences of Domestic Violence on Schooling Adolescents
The fact that domestic violence causes physical injuries, dysfunctional families, and broken relationships is well known. However, unless you have been paying close attention to the legal developments related to this topic, you are probably unaware that there has been a radical change in the way our legal system deals with domestic violence. Ever since our society's attitude toward domestic violence began to change, numerous laws have been enacted every year that specifically address domestic violence within our state and our federal statutes. As a result, the consequences of committing or being accused of committing domestic violence are also growing (Sterne & Poole, 2009). The following list illustrates some of the severe consequences associated with domestic violence cases:

1) Enhanced jail or prison time, fines, the completion of a fifty-two week batterer's treatment class, and the issuance of a criminal protective order. Our criminal justice system now deals with domestic violence as a unique offense. Domestic violence is no longer treated as a simple battery. Consequently, our system imposes enhanced and specialized sentences for these offenses.

2) The loss of employment opportunities. One of the most serious consequences of domestic violence is the stigma that is attached to these crimes. With a conviction of domestic violence on one's record, it can be very difficult to obtain employment in certain types of occupations, especially jobs within government.

3) The denial or revocation of a state license to engage in a particular type of business. An allegation of having committed domestic violence can also make it difficult for a person to obtain or maintain a state issued license, such as a license to sell real estate or a license to work in or operate a care facility.

4) The issuance of a criminal and/or family law restraining order. Restraining orders are issued by criminal and family courts routinely where there are allegations of domestic violence. An obvious consequence to these orders is the loss of liberty, to the extent the order forbids the restrained party from going to certain locations.

5) The loss of the right to possess firearms. When a restraining order is issued, it is automatic that the offender shall be restrained from owning or possessing a firearm. This restriction is particularly burdensome to people with occupations that require the possession of handguns.

6) The loss of immigration status. A conviction for domestic violence can result in the loss of a person's immigration status. This loss of immigration status will occur, even if a person convinces the court to allow him or her to withdraw a plea of guilty upon successful completion of an anger management program.

7) An increase in the amount of spousal support paid. The occurrence of domestic violence in a relationship is one of many factors the court must consider when ordering spousal support. Consequently, a perpetrator of domestic violence is more likely to be ordered to pay additional spousal support.

8) The loss of the right to collect spousal support. In California, a person who is found to have committed domestic violence may lose his or her opportunity to collect spousal support.

9) The loss of child custody or visitation rights. A major factor the court must consider in determining custody and visitation rights is whether or not there has been domestic violence within the relationship. Courts are particularly sensitive to this issue when considering the best interests of the minor children.

10) An automatic extension to a foreign spouse and his or her children to remain within the country and an increased obligation to support them. In cases where foreign spouses make allegations of domestic violence against their spouses who are sponsoring them, the foreign spouse will be granted an automatic extension to his or her right to remain within our country.
When this happens, the sponsored spouse's obligation to support the foreign spouse and his or her children is also extended.

11) A civil lawsuit by the victim spouse. Victims of domestic violence can file civil suit against their abusers. These lawsuits can result in awards of large compensatory and punitive damages.

12) An unequal division of property. California law authorizes family law courts to award a spouse the other spouse's interest in community property as payment for any damages awarded to the victim spouse pursuant to a civil lawsuit judgment.

13) A crime of moral turpitude. Domestic violence is considered a crime of moral turpitude. Consequently, when a person has a conviction for domestic violence on his or her record, his or her credibility can be called into question when testifying.

Suggested Prevention Measures of Domestic Violence

In the view of McKinney and Vento (2011), domestic violence can be prevented by taking the following steps:

- Ring the police if you witness any occurrence of domestic violence.
- Publicly speak up against domestic violence. Domestic violence prevention should become a mass cause and it is important to sensitize others as much as you can. You can, for instance, tell a friend that makes a joke about beating your spouse, that it is unacceptable to you as a humorous subject.
- One of the ways to prevent domestic violence is by showing your children how to live a healthy, respectful, romantic relationship through your relationship with your spouse. Live by what you preach. Remember this as one of the crucial domestic violence prevention tips.
- If you have a clue that your neighbor, co-worker, friend, or family member is suffering from any form of domestic violence refer him or her to an organization that may help and aid in the prevention of domestic violence.
- If your neighbor, co-worker, friend, or family member is abusing his or her partner, find ways to communicate your concerns to him or her and show your firm stance at preventing domestic violence.
- Take part in educating others on how to ensure prevention of domestic violence by engaging a speaker from a domestic violence organization in your locality to give a talk about domestic violence at your religious or professional organization, public organization or volunteer group, in your workplace, or in schools.
- Persuade people in your neighborhood to watch out for signs of domestic violence and related crimes. Recognizing red flags is a concrete step in the direction of prevention of domestic violence.

Counseling Implications

Regardless of whether an adolescent is in need of a protection plan or not, the research evidence indicates that all adolescents living with domestic violence or its aftermath can benefit from individual and group work to help them understand what has happened to them and their families, to overcome the negative impact of living with abuse, and to move forward in their lives. The implication is that such work can raise awareness about the issues, help children to learn strategies for keeping safe, ensure that they feel less isolated and ‘different’, and help them to feel better about themselves. It needs to be done sooner rather than later. As such, adolescents who appear to cope better tend to have strong attachments to a non-violent parent or other significant adult, and to have had the opportunity to engage in therapeutic work sooner rather than later. Again professionals working in criminal justice organizations can and should intervene whenever they suspect that a child is being exposed to domestic violence, as such professionals and their employing agencies need to have clear processes and tools for assessing and managing the risk that is associated with domestic violence. Similarly, health professionals working in adult mental
health teams should be well placed to ask sensitively about domestic violence and to identify children who may be currently exposed to domestic violence or living with its legacy

CONCLUSION
Conclusively, domestic violence exists in the community, and adolescents report that they do experience domestic violence in their homes; and adults report that sometimes adults mistreat adolescents in several ways. Adolescents mentioned forms of domestic violence against them as physical violence, emotional violence, sexual violence and economic violence. The reported violence perpetrators include: mothers, stepmothers, fathers, stepfathers and uncles. Causes of domestic violence given are as follows; poverty, jealousy, drug and alcohol abuse, child’s misbehavior and child’s low social status in the hierarchy of power in the community. Findings shows that domestic violence inflicts harm to children such as emotional harm, psychological harm, physical pain and low self-esteem which impact the child learning systems thereby influencing a child to lose interest in education, arrive late at school, being absent from school, dropout of school and even early marriage. Since the purpose of the study was to examine the influence of domestic violence on adolescents’ psychological wellbeing, the research study have revealed that domestic violence against adolescents’ influences their psychological wellbeing. More research however needs to be done on strategies that can be put into place to mitigate the underlying causal factors of this social pathology considering the implications it has not only on adolescents but society at large.

RECOMMENDATIONS
The study amongst others recommends the following:
- There should be clear procedures in the society for safeguarding adolescents based on a clear assessment of the adolescents’ needs, their parents’ capacity to provide for their needs and any wider environmental or family factors that may impact on their psychological wellbeing.
- There should be agreed inter-agency procedures for working with the adolescents, the victim and the perpetrator of the abuse.
- The provision of therapeutic support services to the adolescents and adult victim.
- A response that aims to work with perpetrators to get them to take responsibility for their behaviour and the impact it has on others.
- There should be arrange of services that are tailored to the specific needs of perpetrators based on their ability to engage and willingness to change.
- Adolescents should be directed how to live a healthy, respectful, romantic relationship through your relationship with your spouse.

REFERENCES