

Married Women's Intention to Report Domestic Violence against Women: Implication for Global Education

Dr. D.I. Igba¹, Dr. E.E. Ekpenyong², Dr. C.E. Igba¹, Dr. S.N. Ajah¹ & N. Okoro¹

Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki – Nigeria¹ and University of Calabar, Nigeria²

Abstract

Little is known about the prevalence of violence against women among families and less about whether they utilize anti violence policies. However, failure to report violence against women incidents to authorities would lessen the efficacy of these policies. This study investigated the prevalence of violence against women among families and their reporting intentions for violence against women incidents. Two hundred and eighty-two women completed a survey on their intentions to report domestic violence against women. Results found violence against women exists among families and they would report to authorities if the policy outlined specific information. Women who had been battered were more likely to report than those women who had not been victimized. Implications for women are discussed.

Keywords: Married women; intention to report; domestic violence; battering; anti-violence policy; global education

INTRODUCTION

Domestic Violence is carried out with the intention of physical or emotionally harming another person who is related to you by blood, present or prior marriage or common law marriage; having or allegedly having a child in common (familyresueing.org,2016,A Division for Advancement of Women, 2010; Fergunson, 2011; Bandura 1973; Aihie, 2009). However, Domestic Violence Against women takes the following form: physical abuse, emotional, economic, sexual, destruction of property or pets. Domestic Against women causes more injury to adult women than cancer, heart attacks or strokes combined. In 2016, the city of Abakaliki reported

52,300 domestic violence calls, an average of 445 calls per day, there were 39 domestic violence related to physical abuse (Ashimolowo & Otufale, 2009, 2012). Whilst the majority of research into violence against women has been conducted with women, there is limited research in the emerging violence against women population among families.

Violence against women is defined as aggressive, intentional behaviour that is repeatedly carried out by an individual or group, using battery forms of contact against a defenceless victim (David & Peter, 1999; Antai, 2011). Research has shown that like traditional domestic violence against women, domestic violence against women is a global problem (David & Peter 1999). In Nigeria, of the 3000 women surveyed from years 20 to 30, 14% reported being victims of violence against women (Igbokwe, Michael, Kelechi 2013). Violence against women has been regarded as more harmful than traditional violence against women due to the associated detrimental outcomes associated with it (Okeke & Nzewi, 2008; Zadding, 2012). These negative outcomes which are similar to the consequences of traditional violence against women can include suicidal ideation, depression, behavioural difficulties and psychosomatic problems (Ede and Nweke , 2016; Nwafor, Afor, Uze and Nworie, 2017, Nwali, WHO,2005). Victims of violence against women have also reported feeling lonely, hopeless, anxious, threatened and angry (Nwali and Orie, 2015; Nweke, 2017).

Currently, the highest reported incidence of violence against women occurs between the ages of 18 to 25 years (Okeke and Nzewi, 2008; Pillay, 2011). Many studies suggest that violence against women increases with age and can continue into adulthood. However, this remains unclear given that domestic violence against women research has predominantly been conducted with ladies and adolescents. Nwafor and Uze (2017) argued that as violence against women increases from family to family, it is plausible that this trend would continue from family to wider society. Some studies have confirmed the occurrence of domestic violence against women in family and wider society; however, there is a paucity of research in this area (Nwafor, Orie and Uze, 2017; Nweke ,2017; David and Peter, 1999). In particular, little is known about the prevalence of violence against women among Nigerian families or how families are responding to this phenomenon (Antai, 2010; Okeke & Nzewi, 2008; David & Peter, 1999, UN General Assembly,2012).

HELP SEEKING AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

To some extent, the negative consequences of being victimized can be reduced by the effective use of coping strategies (Akpan & Usoro, 2005). Coping strategies employed by families include technical strategies (e.g. ostracized the violent from the wider society), ignoring the perpetrator, talking to friends, confronting the violence against women and threatening to tell an adult (Okeke, 2008; and Zadding, 2012). However, victims of violence against women rarely employ the coping strategy of help-seeking that involves reporting violence against women incidents to an adult in their family(WHO, 2005).Global education is a creative approach of bringing about

change in our society .Global education is an active learning process based on the universal values of tolerance, solidarity, equality, justice ,inclusion, cooperation and non violence (Gen-europe.org global education).Global education will help to reduce battery against women and promote tolerance, equality, justice and non violence as well as enduring peace in the family.

Help-seeking is defined as the ‘behaviour of actively seeking help from other people’ (Wolfe and Jaffe, 1999). It is regarded as a productive coping strategy that has a positive influence on an individual across the lifespan and can help alleviate distressing psychological symptoms (Murphy & Mhyr, 2016). Despite research highlighting that it is important that individuals seek help by reporting violence against women to a helpful adult, studies have shown that women are unwilling to report to adults (Sandra, 2013). Compared to victims of traditional violence, children and adolescent victims are actually even less likely to seek help and report incidents to an adult (Shannon, 2012; & Pillay, 2011).

There appears to be several reasons why family members do not report domestic violence against women incidents to authorities (Shannon, 2012). There is a logistical reason which could be due to the complexity of domestic violence against women. Because domestic violence against women is carried out with the aim to humiliate and victimisation can occur anywhere and anytime. For some families, it is unclear whether they should report domestic violence against women to adults if the incident occurred outside the family (Wolfe and Joffe,1999). Even family elders are uncertain about their responsibility to protect or manage their members when domestic violence against women occurs beyond the family setting (Pillay,2011,Okeke et al,2008,).

Many family members also fear that reporting an incident of domestic violence against women to an adult will result in a loss of their access to honour (e.g., restricted feeding access) or their access will be more closely monitored (Zadding, 2013; Igbokwe et al., 2013; UN.General Assembly,1979). Alternatively, younger members of the family fear that the adult may view their reporting behaviour as childish and advise them to ignore the situation (Pillay., 2011; Igbokwe et al, 2013). Fear that the adult will not be able to understand the situation or address it appropriately causes some women to conclude that there is nothing to be gained in reporting domestic violence against women (Shannon, 2012). Additionally, studies have also shown that women worry about telling adults because they fear the situation could become worse (Igbokwe et al, 2013; Sandra, 2013). Igbokwe et al (2013) found that of the battered women who told an adult, 46% stated that the domestic violence against women did not stop, and sometimes became worse. This finding is particularly concerning because it can create mistrust and decrease the confidence the women have in adults' ability to help them (Shannon,2012; Sandra, 2013; Bandura, 1973). Other studies have shown family elders often ignored domestic violence victims' reports (Aihie, 2009; David and Peter, 1999).

Victims become resigned to the fact that even if the domestic violence against women has been *reported, and action taken, the perpetrator would not be able to be stopped. This form of violence* becomes something that must be endured (Okeke, et al., 2008;

Zadding, 2012; David and Peter, 1999). Domestic violence victims therefore experience a sense of helplessness. It is unclear whether families perceive similar barriers to reporting domestic violence against women incidents to authorities. Also, willingness to seek help from authorities tends to decrease with age (Nwafor, Afor, Uze, and Nworie, 2017;). Older women feel they should be able to manage problems such as domestic violence against women by themselves (Antai, 2011). There is limited research on whether women use reporting protocols within the family anti-violence policy to assist them with reporting domestic violence against women incidents.

Families have a responsibility to provide a safe social environment (Igbokwe et al., 2013; Krishna, 2015). One way in which families can achieve this is through the development and implementation of anti-domestic violence against women policies (Igbokwe et al 2013). Many domestic violence against women policies have been adapted from traditional bullying research (Pillay, 2011) but few have been formally evaluated (Cortes, 2000, WHO 2005 and Zadding, 2012). Overall, the efficacy of anti-violence policies has yielded inconsistent results. Preliminary research has been conducted, with some studies finding anti-violence policies to be effective in reducing domestic violence against women (Igbokwe et al., 2013 and WHO and Liverpool, 2011). It is important to note that those policies found to be effective were developed collaboratively and incorporated a 'whole-family approach' (e.g., detailing responsibilities of family members as well as adults) (Akpan et al., 2005). Although some policies have been found to be effective, the majorities have not (Krishna, 2015; Pillay, 2011; UN.Women, 2011). Many policies do not include specific types of violence (Ndungu, 2014) and do not provide information on how incidents were to be followed up or how victims would be supported (Pillay, 2011 and Sandra, 2013).

These vague policies leave ambiguous areas for children as well as for both families' members. When there is limited direction within a policy, organisations are uncertain how to manage domestic violence against women incidents (Pillay, 2011 and Okeke et al., 2008). This can lead to reluctance to help the domestic violence, and as a consequence, there is less reporting by victims (Pillay, 2011). There also appears to be underreporting of victimisation in the home with approximately 50% of home violence not reported (Sandra, 2013). Some family members who did report domestic violence felt that their adults did not address or manage the domestic violence situation adequately (Olasunkanmi, 2013; UN Women, 2011).

As Abdulalahi (2015) pointed out, if domestic violence against women is not reported, the policy is ineffective. To improve the policy, families need to understand and to address the underpinnings of why people do not report domestic violence against women. While there has been an increase in research on domestic violence against women and policies in families, little is known about domestic violence against women policies to assist young adults in the family setting.

The aim of this exploratory study was to examine the prevalence of domestic violence against women among family members and their perceptions of barriers to reporting

domestic violence to adult family members. In addition, the study explored whether family policy on anti-violence had an influence on reporting intentions of domestic violence against women.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 282 married women, 204 un-married ladies (72.3%) and 78 adolescents girls (27.7%) from urban and rural areas in Ebonyi State families. A combination of convenience and criteria sampling was used (Bandura, 1973 and Aihie, 2009). Participants were aged between 18 -25 years ($M = 19.73$, $SD = 2.14$). Of the 282 married women, 185 were recruited via the building sites of Ebonyi state and were provided with research credit for their participation. All other participants were recruited by site engineers sent by a Mason coordinator from the urban and were offered the opportunity to be entered into a draw to win a shopping voucher for their participation.

Measure

A 126-item questionnaire was administered to examine various sections of life at family as part of a larger study. For this study 14 questions were analysed. A definition of domestic violence against women was given before the two questions relating to frequency of domestic violence against women victimisation and perpetration: domestic violence against women is using battery. It is when one person or a group of people repeatedly try to hurt or embarrass another person, using their physical or combat or use power over them. With domestic violence against women, the person battering usually has some advantage over the person targeted, and it is done on purpose to hurt them, not like an accident or when friends tease each other."

Two questions asked the following: "How frequently you have been battered by someone who you suspect was from your family during the past 12 months" and "With reference to the above definition, please indicate how frequently you have domestic violence against women by someone from your family during the past 12 months." Both questions required participants to respond on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from never, once or twice, monthly, weekly, and daily.

Ten items referred to barriers that may prevent women reporting domestic violence against women to the family. These items were adapted from previous research (National Network to end Violence, 2010; Igbokwe et al., 2013; Okeke et al., 2008). For all ten items, participants were asked to complete a 4 point Likert scale on the likelihood of a barrier influencing their reporting intentions (e.g., be too embarrassed to talk about domestic violence against women with anyone): Very Likely; Likely; Unlikely; and Very Unlikely. Participants were also required to indicate their gender (male or female) and also their age (18 - 25 years).

Procedure

Clearance was obtained from the institutional ethics committee prior to distributing the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered via the familys online survey platform, Key Survey. Participation was voluntary and responses were anonymous. An online information sheet was provided to participants at the beginning of the study and submission of the questionnaire indicated consent. To receive course credit or enter the prize draw, the participants were required to complete all items on the questionnaire. Data collection was completed between January 2017 and June, 2018.

RESULTS

Prevalence and frequency of domestic violence against women victimisation and domestic violence against women perpetration

The frequency of respondents who reported experiencing domestic violence against women victimisation and violence perpetration is shown in Table 1. By combining the frequencies in the "Once or Twice", "Monthly", "Weekly" and "Daily" categories, 14.5% (n = 41) of respondents were classified as domestic violence against women victims and 7.9% (n = 22) were classified as domestic violence perpetrators.

Table 1: Frequency rates of being a domestic violence victim and/or perpetrator

		Never	Once or twice	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	Total
Domestic violence victim	N	241	32	3	4	2	41
	%	(85.5%)	(11.3%)	(1.1%)	(1.4%)	(.7%)	(14.5%)
Domestic violence perpetrator	N	260	14	0	7	1	22
	%	(92.2%)	(5.0%)	(0.0%)	(2.5%)	(.4%)	(7.9%)

Gender differences for domestic violence against women victimisation and domestic violence against women perpetration

A Chi-Square test for independence (with Yates Continuity Correction) revealed no significant association between gender and victimisation, $\chi^2 (1, n = 282) = .48, p = .487$,

$cp = .053$ or between gender and perpetration, $\chi^2 (1, n = 282), = .49, p = .48, cp = .057$.

Frequency of help-seeking strategies

The scale of perceived barriers for future reporting intentions was collapsed from a four point Likert scale to two, Unlikely and Likely, because there were too few

responses for the extreme categories of Very Likely and Very Unlikely. Table 2 presents the frequency of perceived barriers for intention to report incidences of domestic violence against women.

Table 2: Frequency of perceived barriers for intentions to report incidences of violence against women

Perceived barrier to reporting to the family	Frequency (%)
I am confident in managing myself	81.6
I am too busy to report domestic violence against me	45.7
I am too embarrassed to talk about domestic violence against me	33.7
I am unsure how to report	75.5
The family does not provide enough information	66.0
I am not confident in support options offered by the family	42.2
I do not know how to make an official report	75.9
I would not expect a favourable outcome to occur if I report violence against women to the family	37.6
I do not know of a policy that protects women against violence at the family level	64.5
I do not know where to locate policy information at family	73.0

Victim status and perceived barriers influencing likelihood of future reporting

To determine more directly if there was a significant difference between victimisation status and the likelihood of perceived barriers influencing future reporting intentions, a Z-Test for proportions was conducted instead of a Chi-Square. In order to obtain a more parsimonious view, the scale of perceived barriers was collapsed from a four point Likert scale to two, unlikely and likely. Of the nine perceived barriers, there was only a significant difference for "knowing how to make an official report" between victims and non-victims. As can be seen in Table 3, victims were more likely to know how to make an official report than non-victims ($p = <.05$). Results with and without Bonferroni adjustments are presented due to the exploratory nature of the study and differing opinions about the validity and potentially over-correcting bias in the

application of this adjustment (Cortes, 2000). As can be seen, "knowing how to make an official report" is significant when the Bonferroni adjustment is not applied.

DISCUSSION

It was found that violence between peers does exist in the family population with approximately one in six family members reporting being victimized by another family members in the past 12 months. This is consistent with the literature on violence victimisation in adolescents where the rates of violence range between 12% and 25% (Igbokwe, Michael & Kelechi, 2013; Pillay, 2011 & Krisha, 2015).

Our results provide evidence that domestic violence victimisation continues into adult life (Zadding, 2012). Emerging adults violence with one in thirteen women reported having violence another women in the past 12 months. This finding is consistent with adolescent violence perpetration prevalence rates which range from 3% to 15% (UN women, 2011; Sandra, 2013; and Ndungu, 2004). No gender differences were found for violence against women victims or domestic violence against women perpetrators. This is consistent with previous literature that has found no significant differences between male children or adolescents and female children or adolescents being involved either as victims or bullied (National Network to end Violence, 2010; Murphy, Schei, Mhyr, 2016; & Okeke et al., 2008).

Table 3: Influence of victim status on the likelihood of perceived barriers influencing reporting intentions

Perceived Barrier to reporting to the family	% non-victims	% victims	ϕ	BCa 95% CI	
				Lower	Upper
I am confident in managing violence against women myself	81.4	82.1	.006	-.126	.135
I am too busy	48.5	38.5	-.071	-.187	.051
I am too embarrassed	33.3	41.0	-.057	-.070	.199
I am unsure how to report	77.9	69.2	-.072	-.203	.059
The family does not provide enough information	67.5	56.4	-.082	-.231	.059
I am not confident in support options offered by the family	40.7	46.2	.039	-.090	.168
I do not know how to make an official report	78.4	64.1	-.118	-.263	.026

Perceived Barrier to reporting to the family	% non-victims	% victims	ϕ	BCa 95% CI	
				Lower	Upper
I would not expect a favourable outcome to occur if I reported violence against women to the family	38.1	38.5	.003	-.119	.113
I do not know of a policy that protects women against domestic violence in family	65.4	51.3	-.103	-.223	.021
I do not know where to locate policy information at this family	73.6	64.1	-.075	-.202	.048

Perceived barriers to reporting future incidents

The findings show that women have high levels of confidence in dealing with domestic violence against women incidences themselves and would not report domestic violence against women to family members. This finding is consistent with domestic violence against women literature that has found that, as women victims age, their likelihood of reporting incidents decreases. This could be a consequence of their developmental need for autonomy (Cortes, 2000; Ferguson, 2011; Akpan et al., 2005; Aihie, 2009). Emerging adults may think they should be able to manage problematic situations independently (Abdulahi, 2015).

Uncertainty surrounding reporting protocols also appears to be a barrier to reporting violence against women. Approximately 76% of ladies stated they were uncertain how to report domestic violence against women. Because domestic violence against women occurs as a result of things not vital, victims can be targeted outside the family. Women could be unsure of the responsibilities in this situation. Our findings mirror previous studies, Okeke et al (2008, Sandra (2013) that show violence against women victims are confused about the responsibility of family members when domestic violence against women occurs outside the family.

Violence against women victims in families are uncertain to whom they should report UN Women (2012). For family members to who to report is even more complicated because the structure of family authority is more complex than that of a family. In our findings, 58 percent of indicated increased intentions of do not report reporting incidents if they had confidence that an authority figure within the family would render assistance. Our findings are also similar to the ladies and adolescent domestic violence against women literature, that women do not report because they fear reporting to an authority figure will lead to an increase in the violence against women or the situation will stay the same (Sandra, 2013; Shannon, 2012). Although victims of domestic violence against women and traditional violence against women are encouraged to report incidents to authority figures, there is evidence that not all reporting leads to favourable outcomes. This may have a negative effect on future

reporting. A workplace violence study by Bilgel, Aytac and Bayram (2006) found that employees who did report to authority figures were unhappy with the outcome and experienced negative consequences (e.g., increased levels of anxiety).

The results from the current study found that the most popular reason for increased intentions to report violence against women was the knowledge that reporting would result in the cessation of the domestic violence against women. For a culture of reporting violence against women to occur, it is vital that designated reporting figures respond quickly and effectively to a violence against women victim's report.

A clear anti-violence policy outlining procedure and protocols for family members to follow may increase members likelihood of reporting violence against women (Murphy, Schei and Mhyr, 2011). However, contrary to previous research in this area, only one in three respondents in our study indicated that they would be likely to report domestic violence against women to the family, even if they knew how to use the protocols to report domestic violence against women.

There are two reasons why the women in the current study would not report violence victimisation to the family, despite knowing about reporting protocols. First, some studies found that women only report when they deem the violence against women to be chronic and pervasive (Okeke et al., 2008). Our findings suggest that these women may not perceive domestic violence against women as detrimental enough to warrant reporting. Because the current study did not investigate types or severity of domestic violence against women it is not known whether women's intentions to report are influenced by these factors. Second, other studies have found that victims of violence believe that reporting incidents is of no use because little can be done to reduce domestic violence against women (Moore, 2013; Griffen, 2012 and Cortes, 2000). It is possible that the families in the current study did not feel that reporting would reduce domestic violence against women. This is plausible, given that students only intended to report domestic violence against them provided they knew that there would be adequate support and a favourable outcome, that is, would decrease.

Differences between victims and non-victims

In our study, women who were violent victims and who were aware of reporting protocols reported that they would be more likely to report incidents than women who had never been victimized. This finding is contrary to previous literature which has found that a majority of women who have been victims of traditional victimized are unlikely to report to an adult (David & Peter, 1999); Ajoni, 2008). Perhaps the fear and stigma surrounding reporting is of a lesser magnitude for family members than it is for children and adolescents (Ashimolowo, Otufale, 2011; Griffen, 2012).

LIMITATIONS

This exploratory study was limited in several ways. First, these results should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size and low proportion of female

women. It is worth noting that the sample was only taken from one state in South Eastern Nigeria and the questionnaire was self-report. The questionnaire asked respondents "How frequently have you been battered by someone who you suspect was from your family during the past twelve months." Because some of the participants were in their first year of marriage, they would have only stayed in marriage for six months when they completed the questionnaire. The data from the immediate family can still be used because the question specified that the violence against women was someone whom they suspected was from their family.

Another limitation was that the questionnaire did not assess the severity (e.g., one time, level of violence during) the incident. This would have been useful information because reporting intentions may be influenced by the severity of the victimized. Another limitation was that the questionnaire asked about intentions for reporting as opposed to actual help seeking and reporting behaviours. The questionnaire was worded this way because there may not have been an adequate number of violence against women within the family to enable the researchers to examine past help-seeking behaviours. The Theory of Planned Behaviour can be used to justify using reported intentions rather than reported actions because intentions are viewed as encompassing the motivational factors that influence behaviour. From the perspective of this theory, as long as the individual has the necessary resources and opportunities, paired with the intention to perform the behaviour, then the behaviour is likely to occur.

IMPLICATIONS

The current exploratory study has practical implications. It would be useful for policy makers in family settings to understand the importance of making policies specific to families with clear guidelines for women about when to report and to whom to report. Family elders who receive these reports should feel confident that the design of the policy allows them to manage incidents effectively.

A majority of families do not intend to report violence against women even if they know how to do so. They should therefore focus on increasing women's intentions to report violence against women victimisation by providing reassurance that their report will be examined and action will be taken.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Despite its limitations, the present study contributes to the literature of domestic violence against women through the exploration of perceived barriers to reporting intentions in the emerging adulthood population. Families need to empower members to request assistance, and to ensure that they prepare adults adequately so that when victimisation reports are made, they are managed well.

To increase understanding of how to help violence against women victims within the family, future qualitative research should be conducted on the help-seeking

behaviours currently undertaken by women. Future studies should also explore whether violence against women policies should be adapted from those used outside the family. Help-seeking behaviours of women may be more likely to mirror individuals outside the family than children and adolescents in family, as examined in previous studies.

Families have a responsibility to protect women by providing a safe social environment. Future research should focus on developments in this area to ensure families create effective policies to manage violence against women.

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