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The Impact of Domestic Violence on Academic Performance and Emotional Stability of Polytechnic Students: A Case Study of NACEST Makurdi

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is a hydra-headed monster that is wreaking untold havoc in our society, it affects men and women of all ages, races, religions, educational attainment and financial status. The prevalence of domestic violence is arguably one of the major societal concerns in the country, because the problems that arise from domestic violence affect all facets of life. Also, the long term effect of domestic violence has scarred victims for life. In Nigeria cases of domestic violence is grossly underreported due to the secrecy attached to the problem, the patriarchal nature of our society and long entrenched beliefs. Also, most studies carried out on domestic violence does not factor in the long term effects of domestic violence on young adults who were exposed to domestic violence as children. This study aims to look at the long term effects of domestic violence on polytechnic students. Using specially designed questionnaires which will be administered to students and collated, based on the data collected, students that fit the profile are selected for the study, as the primary source of data.

Key Words: *Domestic violence, Victim, Patriarchy*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behaviour in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain control over another intimate partner (The United States Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women). Put simply, Domestic Violence is violence or other abuse that occurs in a domestic setting. This includes any behaviour that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone. In the broadest sense domestic violence also involves violence against children, parents or the elderly. It can assume multiple forms, which include, physical, verbal, emotional, economic, religious, reproductive, or sexual abuse. It can range from subtle, coercive forms to marital rape and other violent physical abuse, such as choking, beating, female genital mutilation. It also includes psychological torment, the use of technology to harass, control, monitor and stalk and generally make life unbearable for the victim.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has defined domestic violence as the range of sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against women by current or former male intimate partners.It also includes engaging any activity towards a family or household member that makes a reasonable person to feel terrorized, frightened, intimidated, harassed or molested. And it doesn't matter whether or not physical force was applied as long as the victim has been threatened. Giddens (2006) holds that domestic violence is physical abuse directed by one member of the family against another or others. It covers all physically, sexually and or emotionally abusive behaviour by an individual to assert and maintain control over another in the family scene. Worldwide, Domestic violence affects both male and female although statistics show that women suffer more from domestic violence. When the man is at the receiving end of domestic violence it is rarely reported due to social stigmas and perceptions, especially within the African socio-cultural context where patriarchy is practiced, and the males are expected to show strength and dominance. Huss (2009) sees domestic violence any action of violence perpetrated within the context of significant interpersonal relationship. This could include violence between a husband and a wife, a girlfriend and boyfriend, or gay or lesbian partners. It could be violence between parents and children, adult children and elderly parents or we could meet it between siblings.

Wikipedia defines domestic violence as violence or other abuse that occurs in a domestic setting, such as in a marriage or cohabitation. Domestic violence is often used as a synonym for intimate partner violence, which is committed by one of the people in an intimate relationship against the other. It further states that, in the broadest sense, it also involves violence against children, parents and the elderly. Walker (1999) notes that the term domestic violence and abuse was found to be used differently. In studies conducted in the USA, the term domestic violence was used to identify wife abuse, woman abuse, battered women, and partner abuse. Also, physical, sexual and psychological abuse that usually, although not exclusively directed against women partners. While when violence and abuse is directed against children, the term child abuse is used.

Children and young adults from homes where domestic violence is perpetuated suffer long term effects of the damage caused by the experience. The sociological and psychological damage that domestic violence creates in children and young adults cannot be overemphasized. In an environment where domestic violence is recurrent, it can produce an intergenerational cycle of violence in children and other family members, which is carried into the larger society, unconsciously they accept and condone violence and begin to see violence as an acceptable and easy solution to problems. This perception blurs the line and

does not allow victims or abusers to see themselves as such. Domestic violence causes social withdrawal anxiety, shame, fear, depression and severe psychological disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Children who live in a household with violence often show psychological problems such as avoidance, hypervigilance to threats and dysregulated aggression, which may contribute to vicarious traumatization. This effects are ultimately carried into the larger society and it affects academics, social relationships and emotional stability

The impact of domestic violence can be felt throughout the victim's lifetime if nothing is done to mitigate the effects. Experiencing domestic violence can deeply impact higher education students, going beyond physical harm to affect their mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being. Concentration struggles, anxiety, and depression may hinder students, making it tough to maintain a consistent academic routine. The trauma from domestic violence becomes a learning barrier, impeding their coursework engagement. Furthermore, victims might encounter financial hurdles, as seeking help or relocating can strain their resources. The emotional toll of domestic violence can lead to social isolation, making it challenging for students to connect with peers or seek support from friends. It's essential for institutions of higher learning like the universities, polytechnics and colleges of education to recognize these challenges and offer resources like counseling services, support groups, and flexible academic accommodations. This support is crucial in helping students impacted by domestic violence navigate their education while dealing with the aftermath of such experiences.

Domestic violence can also have a significant impact on the emotional stability of students in higher education. The emotional toll from such experiences may result in increased levels of stress, anxiety, and emotional distress among students. The trauma arising from domestic violence can disrupt their emotional well-being, posing challenges for them in maintaining a stable and positive mental state. Thus, students who have undergone domestic violence may display signs of emotional instability, including mood swings, difficulties in regulating emotions, and heightened susceptibility to stressors. This instability, in turn, can affect their overall mental health and contribute to difficulties in forming interpersonal relationships and achieving academic success.

Types of Domestic Violence

The United States Department of Justice office on violence against women, include the following in the definition of Domestic violence.

-Physical Abuse: This can include slapping, battering, shoving, punching, pulling hair, burning, cutting, pinching, denying someone medical treatment and forcing drug/alcohol use on someone.

-Sexual Abuse: This is when the abuser coerces, intimidates, threatens the victim into having sexual contact or sexual behaviour without the victim's consent. This often takes the form of marital rape, attacking sexual body, physical violence that is followed by forcing sex, sexually demeaning the victim, or even telling sexual jokes at the victim's expense.

-Emotional Abuse: This involves stripping the victim of self- worth or self- esteem. Emotional abuse often takes the form of constant criticism, name-calling, injuring the victim's relationship with others or interfering with the victim's abilities.

-Economic Abuse: Economic abuse takes place when the abuser makes or tries to make the victim financially dependent on him/her. Economic abusers withhold the victims access to funds, or prohibit the victim from going to school or work.

-Psychological Abuse: This involves the abuser tormenting the victim mentally. Invoking fear through intimidation, threatening to physically hurt himself or herself, the victim, children, the victim's family, friends or pets, destruction of property, isolating the victim from loved ones, and prohibiting the victim from going to school or work. Threats to hit, injure or use a weapon are also forms of psychological abuse.

Stalking: This can include following the victim covertly, spying on the victim, watching, harassing, showing up at the victim's home or work, sending gifts, collecting information, making phone calls, leaving written messages. While these acts individually are legal, but when done continuously results in a stalking crime. Also related is cyberstalking, which refers to online action or repeated emailing that inflicts substantial emotional damage on the recipient.

Verbal Abuse: This involves using words as a weapon to demean, bully, threaten, terrorise, frighten, intimidate, with a view to instilling fear in the victim and tilt the power balance in a relationship infavour of the abuser for easy control. Verbal abuse takes many forms, like name- calling, constant biting criticism, gaslighting, correcting every action and using every opportunity to blame and humiliate. Verbal abusers use words to manipulate and gain power over their victim. Although verbal abuse is often overlooked, and some argue that for an act to be labelled domestic violence, an action that results in tangible physical injuries must be committed, the effects of verbal abuse includes, depression, anxiety, decreased self-esteem, chronic stress social withdrawal and isolation, feelings of shame, guilt and helplessness which can lead to substance abuse.

The long term negative impact of domestic violence on victims will be highlighted through a study of selected students from NACEST Makurdi.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Domestic violence and the attendant evils associated with it is a subject of global concern and interest, considering the long term effects of domestic violence on the victims. Domestic violence is viewed from different perspectives by scholars, medical practitioners and concerned authorities. This varied views are dependent on the context and the individual giving the definition. Although the subject is given varied definitions, a single denominator runs through the various approaches: that is, the practice is vile and it causes pain and trauma to victims. Thus, modalities should be put in place to mitigate the effects of domestic violence on the victims.

Arinze-Umobi (2008) defines domestic violence as the use of physical force, accompanied by fury, violence or outrage. This definition, although not holistic, covers certain aspects of domestic violence. For the United Nations (1993) domestic violence connotes rough treatment, use of bodily force on others, especially unlawfully, to hurt or harm. It is also regarded as an act of human inflictions, deprivations and discrimination resulting in or likely to result in unlawful physical, sexual and psychological harm, suffering or deprivation. The UN also considers threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty domestic violence.

The Lagos State Domestic Violence Law Section 18(g) defines domestic violence to include physical abuse, sexual abuse, exploitation including, but not limited to rape, incest, and

sexual assault, starvation, emotional, verbal and psychological abuse; economic abuse and exploitation; denial of basic education, intimidation, harassment, stalking, hazardous attack including acid or with offensive or poisonous substance, damage to property….Morohunfola (2021qt.). This definition gives a legalistic coverage of what domestic violence entails.

Adams (2008) analyses domestic violence from the perspective of economic abuse. This can manifest in different forms including, controlling or denying access to financial resources, preventing employment or education opportunities, and sabotaging credit or financial stability. The abuser does this in and attempt to prevent the victim from leaving the abusive relationship, because he/she is totally dependent on the abuser financially. For Black et al (2011) Domestic violence is the costliest and most severe health problem facing society today. This is because domestic violence affects all cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations, ages, ethnicity, education levels and socio-economic classes. Garcia-Moreno et al. (2015) argue that, because domestic violence is frequently shrouded in secrecy, transpiring within the confines of private spaces, it is difficult to detect and address.

In homes where domestic violence is perpetrated children are affected directly or indirectly. They can be at the receiving end of domestic violence or suffer the emotional and mental trauma of witnessing recurrent scenes of domestic violence at home. The impact of domestic violence on children is what Gelles (1997) alludes to, when he avers that, children exposed to domestic violence may face challenges that perpetuate the circle of violence, leading to long-term societal consequences. Which may include a breakdown in family structures and increased social services usage, thus contributing to a broader societal burden. Mc Clusky et al. (2006) state that many children of battered women, aged 6-12 had observed their mother being choked, threatened with weapon, or threatened with death in other ways are living under fear and the shadow of lethal threat. In other to cope, some survivors of abuse turn to alcohol, drugs and other vices.

Combating domestic violence requires concerted collective efforts, this is thus captured by Smith et al. (2008) Domestic violence is a pervasive issue that is often cloaked in secrecy. It is a significant societal challenge that necessitates collective attention.In the same vein, Dutton (2006) opines that recognising the complexities and different manifestations of domestic violence, which includes, physical, emotional, economic and sexual abuse is essential for designing interventions that can successfully address the multifaceted nature of the problem.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research employed primary and secondary sources to generate data. A specially designed questionnaire was distributed to selected students. In person interviews were also conducted as primary sources of data. The research also employed secondary sources of data such as, the internet, magazines, journals, newspapers and relevant materials.

Table 1: Survey Questionnaire

Survey Questionnaire on the Impact of Domestic Violence on Higher Education Students								
Please complete the following by placing a tick in the appropriate box and providing a brief written answer in the blank space provided.								
1.	Sex	Male	Female	Date of Birth				
2.	Do you know what domestic violence entails?					Yes	No	
3.	Briefly give a personal definition of domestic violence.							
4.	Do you come from a home or environment that domestic violence was perpetrated?					Yes	No	
5.	Have you personally experienced domestic violence?					Yes	No	
6.	Who was the perpetrator of the violence?		father	mother		siblings	Others	
7.	How old were you when you first experienced domestic violence?							
8.	How often did you experience domestic violence			Daily		weekly	Monthly	
9.	What form of domestic violence did you Experience?	Verbal		Physical		sexual	financial	All of the above
10.	What form of domestic violence affected you most?							
11’	Has the experience affected your emotional well-being?					Yes	No	
12.	Has domestic violence affected your academic performance?					Yes	No	
13.	Are you still feeling the effects of your experience with domestic violence?					Yes	No	
14.	Are you aware of any provision to assist victims of domestic violence?					Yes	No	
15.	On a scale of 1-10 how would you rate the damaging effect of domestic violence on your emotional well-being and academic performance?							

Table 2. Analysis of Questionnaire Survey Response

Distribution of questionnaire	Total number 476	NDI 82	NDII 114	HNDI 130	HNDII 150
Sex	Male 220	Female 257			
Awareness of what domestic violence entails	436 Answered Yes	21 Believe DV Affects women only	20 No basic knowledge of DV		
Personal experience of DV	298 Experienced DV regularly	138 intermittently	26 Not sure	15 Never	
Most common form of DV experienced	359 physical	84 Verbal	13 Sexual	20 Not sure	
Who perpetrated DV in your home?	328 Father	27 Mother	36 Siblings	65 Uncle/Aunt	
Has DV affected you emotionally?	369 Yes	16 No	51 Not sure		
Has DV affected your academic performance?	376 Yes	11 No	49 Not sure		

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 476 questionnaires were distributed to a cross section of students (male 220/female 257) from NDI-HNDII. A total of 436 students know what domestic violence entails. 21 students believe domestic violence affects women only, 20 had no knowledge of what domestic violence entails. 298 students indicated that they experienced some forms of domestic violence like, verbal, physical, mental, emotional and psychological abuse on a regular basis. Verbal abuse was highlighted as the most frequent form of abuse. 138 students experience domestic violence, but not on a regular basis. 13 students (11 females, 2 males) indicated that they were sexually abused by family members and close family friends. 15 students have never experienced domestic violence personally.

During the in-person interview sessions, the students who were exposed to, or experienced some form of domestic violence as children said their experiences had a negative impact on their person. The experience stripped them of self-confidence, made it very difficult for them to build friendships, integrate and interact freely at school, because of low self- esteem. Students who experienced sexual abuse, indicated that the long term impact of sexual abuse has been a feeling of deep-seated shame and worthlessness. Inability to build close

friendships / relationships because of a lack of trust. It also led to poor performance in school, because they experienced recurrent bouts of anxiety and emotional turmoil.

V. CONCLUSION

Domestic violence is a societal malaise of pandemic proportions. The devastating effects of this pervasive social problem on the physical, mental, psychological, and emotional state of the victim is more far reaching than imagined. The study highlighted the fact that children who were raised in homes where domestic violence was perpetrated grow into young adults carrying a baggage of traumatic childhood experiences that negatively affect their academic performance and emotional balance in school. Also, children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to abuse drugs, foray into campus cultism and display acts of truancy as young adults.

Given the pervasiveness of domestic violence and the long-term effect on victims, particularly young adults in institutions of higher learning, it is imperative that Colleges have a robust Guidance and Counselling Unit/Centres that offer counselling services. Also non-profit organisations that offer help to victims of domestic violence, can be routinely invited to sensitize and offer counselling services to students. The students should also be intimated about their rights, and the legal apparatus available to them.

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