

Influence of Domestic Violence on Nursing Mothers among Women in Cross Rivers State, Nigeria: Implication for Guidance

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of domestic violence on nursing mothers among women in Cross River State. The descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study consist of 27,497 nursing mothers in Cross River State. Based on the formula of Glenn (2012) table of sample specification, a sample of 394 was used. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled Domestic Violence on Nursing Mothers Questionnaire; (DVNMQ). The instrument was face and content validated by two experts in the department of Guidance and Counselling, faculty of Education, Nasarawa State University, Keffi. The data collected were subjected to statistical analysis based on the research question and null hypothesis. The hypotheses were tested using t-test. Findings from the study showed that domestic violence in Cross Rivers State takes forms of physical attack on nursing mothers, abusing nursing mothers verbally and harassed sexually. The study shows that urban and rural nursing mothers did not differ significantly in the dominant forms of domestic violence. The finding from the study showed that domestic violence against nursing mothers have some consequences such as humiliation by husbands, difficult to adjust in the society and health complications. The findings of the study further revealed that there is no significant difference between urban and rural nursing mothers in the perceived role of the victims of domestic violence in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study recommended that all the stakeholders through Cross Rivers State ministry of health should be organising seminars and orientations for spouses on the danger of domestic violence and how to avoid it.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Nursing Mothers.

Introduction

Domestic violence on women is a global issue, with no regard to caste, creed, color, social status, wealth, urban or rural residence, or the ages of victim. The dangers women face especially nursing mothers are often seen as the outcome of social inequality between them and men especially in African society steeped in patriarchy. It is logical to expect that the low status of women in one-way or the other impacts on their susceptibility to violence. Unlike the developed countries where a good number of studies on violence against women have been conducted with the aim of having better knowledge of the implications of violence on women, the same may not be true for developing countries like Nigeria and Cross Rivers State in particular.

Domestic violence on nursing mothers is the range of sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against women by current or former male intimate partners. Whilst women, men, boys and girls can be victims of domestic violence; women and girls are disproportionately affected (Yogo, 2020). Furthermore, the UN General Assembly, declaration on the elimination of violence against women defined gender-based violence as any act of violence that results in

physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering of women; including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (Population Reference Bureau, 2021).

In the same vein, violence against women is defined as a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women which has led to domination and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women (United Nation General Assembly Resolution, 20017. Violence against women continues to be global epidemic that kills, tortures and maims physically, psychological, sexually and emotionally. It is one of the most pervasive of human rights violation that denies women of their security, equality, dignity, self-worth and right to enjoy fundamental freedom. Violence against women is present in most countries in the world cutting across boundaries of culture, class, education, income, ethnicity and age (Yogo, 2020). The above definitions have agreed on one fact, that domestic violence against women involves a wide range of events that can lead to the discomfort of women at home and make life unbearable.

The expression, “violence against women” can mean many different things and many different terms are used to describe it. Common terms include domestic violence, physical abuse, sexual violence, rape, sexual assault and harassment. According to Flood and Pease (2019), each term excludes some forms of violence and is subject to shifts in meaning and also has different cultural interpretations. For example, the concept of rape within marriage may not exist within certain cultures and therefore would not fall within the scope of domestic violence for some people. The causes of gender-based violence are many and varied depending on the types of violence. Traditional attitudes towards women around the world help perpetuate the violence. Stereotypical roles in which women are seen as subordinate to men constrain a woman's ability to exercise choices that would enable her end the abuse. Flood and Pease (2019) further added that poverty and financial insecurity are among the causes of gender-based violence. If a man cannot establish his authority intellectually or economically, he would tend to do so physically.

Another cause might be the image created by the society, which portrays a man, as being strong, educated, creative, and clever while a woman is the opposite of all these traits.

Domestic violence (DV) also called dating violence, intimate partner abuse, spousal abuse, intimate partner violence (IPV), and domestic abuse takes many forms. Maltreatment that takes place in the context of any romantic relationship is abuse as described by the above specific terms. It, therefore, affects men, women, or teen girls and boys, whether in a married or unmarried heterosexual or homosexual relationship. Intimate partner violence may consist of one or more forms, including emotional, psychological, physical, sexual, or economic abuse, and is defined as one person in an intimate relationship using any means to put down or otherwise control the other (Oguche, Daniels & Zubairu, 2022).

Violence is the use of coercive forms of power: the use of force or the threat of its use to compel someone to do something that the person might not otherwise do. It is part of a continuum ranging from legitimate power (a person does something because it is right to do so) through utilitarian power (a person does something because of a reward for doing so) to coercive power (Tony, 2022). Violence has been defined in many ways. The World Health Organization (2020) defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against

oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal- development or deprivation.

Jones (2024) described violence as any act that causes the victim to do something they do not want to do, prevent them from doing something they want to do or causes them to be afraid. Hence violence need not involve physical contact with the victim, but verbal threats and psychological abuse can be equally destructive. Violence is any destructive behaviour, which is geared towards hurting another person. Domestic abuse or violence is the physical, sexual, verbal and emotional abuse, which occurs within the home. Domestic violence is a form of gender violence, which relates more to issues of power than sexuality. It has been known for some time that rape or sexual assault is not related to sexuality; it is related to dominance and an apparent need to humiliate the person being attacked. Similarly, battering as part of domestic violence is also at its heart; an effort to assert dominance or to re-assert a self-image based on dominance (Rhodes &Levison, 2023).

Akpan and Usoroh, (2024) defines domestic violence as violence in intimacy which can be physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or threats of physical or sexual violence that are inflicted on women. Violence directed against women is found in many societies. The manifestations of the social malady of domestic violence include:

Physical Abuse: This is the use of physical force in a way that injures the victim or puts him or her at the risk of being injured. It includes beating, kicking, knocking, pushing, choking, confinement and female genital mutilation. Physical abuse is one of the most common forms of domestic violence.

Sexual abuse - This includes all forms of sexual assaults, harassment or exploitation. It involves forcing a person to participate in sexual activity, using a child for sexual purposes including child prostitution and pornography. Marital rape also comes under this.

Neglect - This includes failure to provide for dependents who may be adults or children, denying family members food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and protection from harm or a sense of being loved and valued.

Economic abuse - This includes stealing from or defrauding a loved one, withholding money for essential things like food and medical treatment, manipulating or exploiting family member for financial gain, preventing a loved one from working or controlling his/her choice of occupation.

Spiritual Abuse - This includes preventing a person from engaging in his/her spiritual or religious practices or using one's religious belief to manipulate, dominate or control him/her.

Self-harm - Aggression towards self as in self-blame, self-harm and suicide are common consequences of sexual abuse. Adikwu, Oguiche, Usman and Olabode (2023) found participants sexually abused in childhood were more than twice as likely to consider committing suicide in later life.

Emotional Abuse - This includes threatening a person or harming a person's sense of self-worth by putting him/her at risk of serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional or mental disorders.

Shouting at a partner which was found to be the most common abuse by (Obi & Ozunba, 2021) is included. Also included in emotional abuse are name-calling, criticism, social isolation, intimidating or exploitation to dominate, routinely making unreasonable demand, terrorizing a person physically and exposing a child to violence.

Psychological Abuse - Which includes behaviour that is intended to intimidate and persecute, and takes the form of threats of abandonment or abuse, confinement to the home, surveillance, threats to take away custody of the children, destruction of objects, isolation, verbal aggression and constant humiliation.

Statement of the Problem

It was observed that violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. Violence against women violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedom. UN (2020) reports that acts or threats of violence, whether occurring within the home or in the community, perpetrated and condoned by the state, instil fear and insecurity in women's lives. According to this report, the fear of violence, including harassment, is a permanent constraint on the mobility of nursing mothers among women and limits their access to resources and basic activities. High social, health and economic costs to the individual and society are associated with violence against women. Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared to men.

This study investigated the influence of domestic violence on nursing mothers among women in Cross River State and explores the significant differences based on women location. By examining these aspects, the study aims to contribute to the existing literature on domestic violence and provide insights for policymakers, educational institutions, and relevant stakeholders to enhance nursing mothers' well-being and professional development.

Purpose of the Study

The specific objective of the study is to:

Examine the influence of domestic violence on nursing mothers among women in Cross Rivers State.

Research Question

The following research question was raised to guide the study:

What is the influence of domestic violence on nursing mothers among women in Cross River State?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho: There is no significant difference between the mean score of urban and rural women on the influence of domestic violence on nursing mothers among women in Cross River State.

Methodology

The design adopted for this study is descriptive survey research design. This is a research method

that describes a given state of affairs at a particular time (Afu, Oguche, Usman and Gimba, 2023). The population of this study comprised 27,497 nursing mothers in public health care centres in Cross River State. while the total number of nursing mother in the nine selected public health care centres was three thousand nine hundred and thirty-five (3,935) (Health management information system, Ministry of Health, 2019). The sample size for the study was 394 representing 10% of the total population which was obtained through a stratified random sampling technique to select three public health care centres each from Cross River North, South and Central Senatorial zones in Cross River State, making a total of nine (9) health care centres.

Balloting was used in selecting the health care centre from each of the senatorial zones. A proportionate random sampling was further used to select respondents from each of the selected health care centre. A total of 394 nursing mothers were selected on Glenn (2012) table of sample specification. The instrument for this study was a self-structured questionnaire designed by the researcher titled; “Domestic Violence on Nursing Mothers Questionnaire (DVNMQ). The questionnaire consists of two sections. Section A: contained Demographic Data of the respondents for location, and Section B: contained items on Consequences of Domestic Violence on Nursing Mothers in Cross Rivers State. The questionnaire was structured along four-point rating scale, the rating scale types of SA (4), A (3), D (2) and SD (1). The instrument was face and content validated by two experts in the department of Guidance and Counselling, faculty of Education, Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency count and percentage for demographic data, mean scores and standard deviation were used to answer the research question while *t*-test was used in testing the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Analysis of Demographic Data

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents According to Location

Location	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Urban	168	42.60
Rural	226	57.40
Total	394	100.00

Table 1 showed that the number of urban respondents is 168 (42.60%) while that of rural respondents is 226 (57.40%). This implies that there were more rural participants in this study.

Answers to Research Question

Research Question One: What is the influence of domestic violence on nursing mothers among women in Cross River State?

Table 2: Influence of Domestic Violence on Nursing Mothers among Women in Cross River State, Nigeria

N=394

S/N	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev	Decision
1.	Nursing mothers are humiliated by the husband	3.17	.78	Agreed
2.	Nursing mother often experience health complication as a result of domestic violence	2.93	.89	Agreed
3.	Nursing mothers find it difficult to adjust in the society where they are being abused	3.02	.81	Agreed

4.	Nursing mothers do not speak up when abused for fear of being divorced by their husbands	2.95	.88	Agreed
5.	Nursing mothers experience some form of psychological disorder as a result of domestic violence	2.98	.88	Agreed
Sectional Mean		3.01	0.85	Agreed

Table 2 showed the influence of domestic violence on nursing mothers in Cross Rivers State, Nigeria. The result showed that the respondents agreed with all items and with an overall mean score of 3.01 and a standard deviation of 0.85. The result applied that domestic violence against nursing mothers has some consequences such as humiliation by husbands, difficult to adjust in the society and health complications.

Hypothesis Testing

The following hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_{01} : There is no significant difference between the responses of urban and rural nursing mothers on the influence of domestic violence on nursing mothers among women in Cross River State.

Table 3: t-test on the Difference between the Responses of Urban and Rural Nursing Mothers on the Influence of Domestic Violence on Nursing Mothers among Women in Cross Rivers State, Nigeria:

Location	Number	Mean	S.D	t-value	Df	Sig(2-tailed)	Decision
Urban	168	3.03	.51466	.602	392	.548	Not Significant
Rural	226	3.00	.44462				

The analysis in Table 3 showed t-test on the difference between the responses of urban and rural nursing mothers on the influence of domestic violence on nursing mothers among women in Cross River State. With the significant values of .548 (greater than the 0.05 level of significance), the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between the responses of urban and rural nursing mothers on the influence of domestic violence against nursing mothers in Cross River State is accepted and concluded that urban and rural nursing mothers did not differ significantly in the effect of domestic violence.

Discussion

The finding from the study showed that domestic violence against nursing mothers have some consequences such as humiliation by husbands, difficult to adjust in the society and health complications. This is supported by Huth and Levendosky (2021), who stated that, domestic violence during pregnancy is associated with numerous health problems for mothers and infants including more health problems during pregnancy, more likelihood of premature labour, and later entrance into prenatal care, lower infant birth weight, greater utilization of health care resources, and more prenatal substance use.

Conclusion

The study concluded that domestic violence against nursing mothers have some consequences such as humiliation by husbands, difficult to adjust in the society and health complications and that the victims of domestic violence also play some roles that exposes them to domestic violence by disrespecting their husbands, in-laws, not performing their duties as a wife, financial demands and avoiding house chores.

Recommendations

From the study, the following recommendation where made:

Spouses should be encouraged by family members to leave in peace and harmony and stay clear of any argument that will lead to domestic violence.

Counsellors at all level should do more to enlighten spouses to understand the deadly implications of domestic violence and how to avoid it occurrences.

The study equally recommended that, nursing mothers, both those in urban and rural areas should be made to participate in seminars that will expose them to the dangers of domestic violence.

Domestic violence has a devastating influence on nursing mothers, as such, health workers in Cross River State should ensure that any form of domestic violence is reported to appropriate authorities and this effort should be irrespective of location.

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