Engaging with people experiencing domestic violence; unresolved problem in Ilorin

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Abstract: Domestic violence is a complex problem in Nigeria. It is a common problem and people live with it as if it is a norm in the society. The aim of this study is to analyse the influence of religious and cultural belief in motivations, coping mechanisms, perceptions and the help-seeking behaviour to advocacy and counselling programs as services. This study adopted a cross-sectional survey method utilizing ex-post facto design. However, the study used the qualitative data collection techniques to achieve its objectives among the target population. Data collected were analyzed using statistical software R (version 2.14.1). The findings of this research show that the Nigerian society's reaction has increasingly affected the number of occurrences of domestic violence. Religion and religious institutions which seem to be an important place of refuge in the lives of most Nigerians have contributed directly or indirectly to the beliefs about domestic violence.

Subjects: General Psychology; Social Psychology; Cognitive Psychology

Keywords: Domestic violence (DV); perception; religion; motivations; coping mechanism
1. Introduction
Domestic violence is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon, and over the years, there have been several theoretical approaches that have attempted to explain this complexity, domestic violence is a total violation of human rights beyond geographical, cultural, religious, social, moral and economic conditions (Fulu, 2015). These days, it is a common problem experienced by Nigerians regardless of age and class to varying degrees and types.

According to the WHO data on domestic violence, 36.1% in Americas, 45.6 in Africa, 40.2% in South East Asia, 36.4% in Eastern Mediterranean, 27.2% in Europe, 27.9% in Western Pacific, and 32.7% in High Income region, women have experienced domestic violence (World Health Organization, 2013).

Violence Against Women (as cited in Davis, n.d.) argued that The Catholic Church’s endorsement of “The Rules of Marriage” in the fifteenth century exhorted the husband to stand as judge of his better half, he was to beat her with a stick upon her commission of an offense.

According to the “Rules” cited by Davis, beating showed a concern for the better half’s soul. The common law in the land of the English gave the head of the house, which is usually a man, the right to beat his better half in the name of keeping the family discipline (Davis, n.d.). The phrase “rule of thumb” referred to the English common law, which allowed a husband to beat his wife if he used a stick that was no bigger than his thumb (Davis, n.d.). English law in early America greatly affected the outcomes of the decisions of the colonial courts (Davis, n.d.).

The Puritans overtly prohibited family violence, the laws, however, lacked strict enforcement and it was not until the 1870s that the first states banned a man’s right to beat his family (Davis, n.d.).

By the 1980s most states had adopted legislation regarding domestic violence (Davis, n.d.). Siegel (as cited in Rawls, n.d.) stated that history has contributed to the societal approval for a man to physical control a woman.

2. Religion, culture and domestic violence in Nigeria
In Nigeria, religion and culture are interwoven, as beliefs and practices are uniquely cultural. Nigerians are highly religious, practicing Christianity, African Traditional Religion and Islam. These religions are the major belief systems, and in some homes, we have people practicing all the religions (Teefah, 2019).

Religious leaders are held in high esteem with respect, love and most importantly with fear (Teefah, 2019). Therefore, religion plays a major role in the life of almost all individual in Nigeria, the patriarchal system in Nigeria subjects women to violence and religion is used as a tool for correcting behavior and exerting male dominance, especially in marriages (Teefah, 2019).

Churches, Mosques and Shrines play major roles in shaping the beliefs and perceptions of victims of domestic violence in the country, there are religious ideologies on women being inferior to men, the perception of women as “unclean” and the portrayal of virtuous women as “submissive”, frown on divorce by some religious sects makes it further difficult for victims to leave abusive marriages, all of which endorse domestic violence (Teefah, 2019).

2.1. Objectives
To analyze the influence of religious and cultural belief in motivations, coping mechanisms, perceptions and the help-seeking behaviour to advocacy and counselling programs as services.
2.2. Hypotheses

1. To what extent are certain variables like demographic variables related to the perceptions of domestic violence service providers regarding male victims?

2. To what extent does negative social stigma attached to the domestic violence victim/survivor influences the victim’s decision in disclosing or not disclosing the violent incidents.

3. There is a relationship between the motivation and stigma highlighted by abused victims in relation to their needs and the support of domestic violence service providers.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey method utilizing ex-post facto design. However, the study used the qualitative data collection techniques to achieve its objectives among the target population.

3.1.1. Study area

This study was conducted in Ilorin Metropolis, capital city of Kwara State, Nigeria. The study involved selected adults inhabiting in the area from age range of 18 years and above. This setting is most suitable for this type of study because the respondents have the character traits of events under investigation.

3.1.2. Ethics

An express consent was sought and gotten from all the participants, they all voluntarily agreed in partaking in the studies.

3.1.3. Research participants

The participants were randomly selected purposively during questionnaires administration. A total sample size of 180 was reached.

3.1.4. Sampling procedure

The sampling technique employed for this study was purposive sampling technique which involves the selection of participants in such a way that it would follow the purpose of the study strictly by considering only adults residing in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara state, Nigeria. Respondents were approached in their various houses and the purpose of the study was explained to them. Participation was voluntary and only those who gave informed consent received the questionnaire. They were assured of confidentiality of their responses and anonymity was achieved since there was no provision on the questionnaire for identifying any personal information. Adults who did not give their informed consent were excluded from the study.

3.1.5. Inclusion criteria

Only adults who are 18 years and above and reside in Ilorin metropolis were involved in this study.

3.1.6. Exclusion criteria

Household with deaf inhabitants, household without family conformation as well as households where inhabitants do not have cognitive ability to respond to the research instruments were excluded from this study.

3.1.7. Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using statistical software R (version 2.14.1). Descriptive statistics such as frequency, mean, standard deviation and variance were performed to quantitatively describe socio-
demographic variables and economic variables. Pearson product moment correlation was used to analyze hypothesis one and three while regression analysis was used to test hypothesis two.

4. Results
This section analyzes and interprets the results of data collected on this finding. Specifically, the study provided answers to research hypotheses. The statistical tests used include T-test for independent measures for showing differences among groups and multiple regression analysis for predictions. Table 1 shows the demographic distribution of the population sample.

4.1. Hypothesis one
Cultural/religious beliefs are positively related to participants’ experiences of domestic/partner violence. The hypothesis was tested using Pearson product moment descriptive statistics.

The result in Table 2 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between cultural/religious beliefs of individuals and their experiences of domestic/partner violence ($r = .199$, $P < .01$). The implication of this result is that the stronger the religious beliefs of individuals, the higher their experience of domestic/partner violence and vice versa. The result is presented in Table 2.

4.2. Hypothesis two
Negative social stigma experienced by victims of domestic/partner violence influences the victim’s decision on reporting or not reporting incidences of violence. The result is presented in Table 3.
The result in Table 3 indicates that negative social stigma experienced by victims of domestic/partner violence significantly influences the victim’s decision on reporting or not reporting incidences of violence \( \left[ R = .260; R^2 = .067; F(1,177), t = 3.577, p < .05 \right] \), where 6.7% changes in victim’s decision on whether to report violence or not is accounted for by negative social stigma they experience.

4.3. Hypothesis three
There is a relationship between the motivation and stigma highlighted by victims of violence and social support received from domestic violence service providers. The result is shown in Table 4;

The result in Table 4 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between motivation and stigma highlighted by victims of violence and social support received from domestic violence service providers \( (r = .355, P < .01) \). The implication of this result is that the higher the motivation and stigma highlighted by victims of violence, the higher the social support received from domestic violence service providers and vice versa.

5. Discussion
It is obvious from the results that domestic violence is a common occurrence in Nigeria just as it is all over the world and should be addressed similarly as a serious plaque that has yet to be resolved or effectively addressed. The findings of this research show that the Nigerian society’s perception of domestic violence has increasingly affected the number of occurrences of domestic violence.

5.1. Implication
This research work may influence the development of policy, practice or service provision, shaping legislation, altering behaviour. More research work must be carried out in order to evaluate the relationship and effect of religion on experiences and perception of domestic violence victims.

The criminal justice system also has a lot of role to play in helping victims get deserved justice. The religious institutions have the responsibility of preaching against violence of any form and encourage victims to seek help when abused, they should respond without delay to every complaint made by the victims and referral to the appropriate authorities should be made without prejudice.

6. Conclusion
Religion and religious institutions which seem to be an important place of refuge in the lives of most Nigerians have contributed directly or indirectly to the beliefs about domestic violence. Most of the times,
victims are asked to endure the pain and accept it as the will of God as marriages are for better and for worse and till death do us part, meaning divorce is not an option. Some religious practices argued that a husband is the head of the family and has the right to discipline erring members of the family. The problem in this kind of scenario is who defines the boundary as to what is discipline and what is violence.

The criminal justice system also fails to protect the victims of domestic violence in most cases. Victims have been advised to go back home and settle issues of domestic violence amicably with the perpetrators by those whom are supposed to protect them (Nigerian police, courts at various levels etc.). The Nigerian culture shy away from the violent acts and most victims are also afraid of seeking help because of the shame associated with domestic violence. Victims are mostly been viewed as irresponsible members of the Nigerian society as against been viewed as a victim and this creates a negative self esteem on victims.

The big and unanswered questions are; can there be a universal definition of domestic violence that will cut across all cultures, beliefs/perceptions and religion? Are Nigerian women as violent as men? Can domestic violence ever be eradicated from the Nigerian society?

Funding
The authors received no direct funding for this research.

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Citation information
Cite this article as: Engaging with people experiencing domestic violence; unresolved problem in Ilorin, Babatunde Oluwayimika Popoola, Abiola Oluwagbemiga Popoola, Felicia Olabisi Awolola & Abimbola Eniola Shoyombo, Cogent Social Sciences (2019), 5: 1710984.

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