Domestic Violence against Women in the Nigerian Rural Context

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Abstract

The problem of domestic violence is not new to African societies. This study focused on the remote causes and implications of domestic violence among rural women. The study adopted a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The respondents were selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Findings revealed that 82.3% of the respondents agree that the economic dependence of women on men is among the major causes of domestic violence, while 52.3% of respondents believe that their communities encourage and tolerate some abusive behavior. A total of 61.5% of the respondents posit that religious and traditional beliefs aid the persistence of domestic violence. On the implications of domestic violence, 84.6% of the respondents agree that children of domestic violent homes will model their behavior according to their experiences. The X^2 value of 13.437 is significant at 3.841 and shows that domestic violence has a serious psychological implication on women. Lack of authorities to report cases of violence to and fear of the consequences of such reports prevented many of these rural women from seeking help when they were abused. This study posits that advocacy groups should employ more practical and appropriate communication mechanisms peculiar to each rural area. Specifically, the use of indigenous languages to form songs, playlet, and proverbs to communicate the implications of domestic violence against women in their communities should be encouraged. Community and women leaders should ensure that women who report cases of domestic abuse are adequately protected from the perpetrators. In doing this, they are able to accept the sensitization processes rather than disregard them or term them 'western'.

Keywords: Abuja, Domestic violence, Rural women, Kuje, Nigerian women, African women, Nigeria, implications of domestic violence

Introduction

Domestic violence is prevalent among women and girls in Nigeria. It is synonymous with close partner violence, family violence, beating, domestic abuse or spousal abuse. More complicating is the reality that the social context of violence against women in Nigeria is related

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to traditional African patriarchal societies, which defines the gendered power structure (Rydstrøm, 2010, Ajayi &Airewele, 2018). To illustrate: in marriage in many societies, a woman surrenders to her husband's exclusive sexual rights and obedience. Traditionally, in Nigeria, as in many other African countries, the beating of wives and children is widely sanctioned as a form of discipline (Adomako &Prah, 2009; Qayum & Ray, 2010). Consequently, by beating their children, parents believe that they are instilling discipline in them, much the same way as husbands beat their wives—who are also regarded as children and as such prone to indiscipline. The society is basically patriarchal, and women's place within the scheme is absolutely subordinate.

Intimate partner violence functions as a means of enforcing conformity with the role of a woman within customary society. It does not matter if the woman is economically dependent or not; her position, like that of the children, is subordinate (Katembo, 2015). Several women are believed to have been subjected to physical, sexual, and psychological violence carried out primarily by husbands, partners, and fathers (Ajayi &Airewele, 2018; Mahserjian,2016), while some girls are often forced into early marriages and are at risk of punishment if they attempt to escape from their husbands. More pathetic is the revelation of gross underreporting and non-documentation of domestic violence due to cultural factors (Nittis, Hughes, Gray & Ashton, 2013). A culture of silence reinforces the stigma attached to the victim rather than condemn the perpetrator of such crimes (Muhammad-Farooq, Saeed-Ali, Parpio1, Lalani, &Marjorie, 2017).

Several incidences of intimate partner violence are reported to the police, who themselves could be judgmental in cases of this nature. The police may also feel that issues on domestic violence are better settled within the confines of the family, with the elders involved. In some cases, they may even collect bribes and dismiss cases that should have been thoroughly investigated. This contributes largely to the problem of estimation and culture of silence on domestic violence. Hence, many experts (Adekeye, Abimbola &Adeusi, 2013; Muhammad-Farooq, et al 2017) believe that the true magnitude of the problem is hard to estimate (Centre of Disease Control and Prevention, 2011). Culture has been identified by Adomako &Prah (2009) and Arisukwu, Igbolekwu, Efugha, Nwogu, Osuke, and Oyeyipo (2019) as a tool used in justifying domestic violence against women through claims that such practices are part of "culture". Yet, culture is not static or homogeneous—it evolves and can change. However, Women not only suffer from negative aspects of culture but also benefit from it (U.N, 2007; Ihalainen, Schure& Sola, 2020; Lngutia, Anthony, &Sumelius, 2020). Other cultural factors include gender-specific socialization, cultural definitions of appropriate sex roles, expectations of roles within relationships, belief in the inherent superiority of males, values that give men proprietary rights over women and girls, notion of the family as the private sphere and under male control, customs of marriage (bride price/dowry), and acceptability of violence as a means to resolve conflict. Hence, cultural factors have been considered as very important to the prevalence of domestic violence in a society (Naved& Persson, 2005; Igbolekwu, Arisukwu, Nwogu &Asamu 2019).

Furthermore, high level of poverty and socio-economic challenges in Nigeria undoubtedly contribute in no small measure to the prevalence of domestic violence (Odumakin, 2013). Consequent upon the aforementioned cultural and economic assets, most rural women in Nigeria are victims of domestic violence. Although this inimical practice may be considered to be as old as humanity, its prevalence tends to be increasing with modernization. This implies that education and other indicators of contemporary societies may not have influenced the practice of domestic violence (Ajayi &Airewele, 2018).

Although there have been many studies (Ajayi & Airewele, 2018; Adomako Ampofo, &Prah, 2009) on domestic violence, the increasing incidences of violence against women,

especially in rural Nigerian communities where many of these women are illiterate and lack help, call for reemphasis. Moreover, the prevailing strong attachment to cultural practices that are discriminatory and obnoxious toward women and inherent in rural communities constitute a major concern that should be addressed, especially considering the fact that some of these rural areas are very remote and may lack viable government and advocacy interventions; hence, there is need for studies that will address the specifics of domestic violence particularly in these rural areas where several of such inhuman practices go unnoticed. Furthermore, most advocacy groups for domestic violence against women in rural areas are not functional, and the functional ones seem not to utilize the appropriate and intentional mechanism to get through to the people. The advocacy approach used in the urban areas cannot be replicated in the rural areas without certain adjustments, which must incorporate their local realities. This could account for one of the reasons behind the increased prevalence of domestic violence among women. This study, therefore, sought to understand the causes behind the increasing cases of domestic violence and its implications on rural women in Kuje, Abuja Nigeria.

Literature Review and Theoretical Perspectives

Literature Review

Intimate partner violence, otherwise known as domestic violence, has been perceived as a global public health challenge (Reif (kay), Jaffe, Dawson, & Lee-Straatman, 2020; Yoo-Mi and Scott, 2019). Although some researchers and international organizations (Ajayi &Airewele, 2018, UNICEF, 2000) have tried to offer detailed definitions of the term 'domestic violence', the different forms and socio-cultural interpretations of domestic violence could be one of the reasons for the varying definitions of this global phenomenon (Aziz & El-Gazzar, 2019). Despite the varying definitions of domestic violence, the prevalence and incidence of domestic violence has continued to increase to the extent that it has become a global health concern. In a bid to offer an acceptable operationalization of the concept of domestic violence, UNICEF (2000) conceptualizes domestic violence as involving acts of:

> "physical abuse such as beating, slapping, arm twisting, strangling, stabbing, burning, kicking, choking, murder, and threats with a weapon or object. It also includes traditional practices harmful to women, such as female genital mutilation and wife inheritance" (the practice of passing a widow and her property to her dead husband's brother (Ajayi &Airewele, 2018).

According to Boyes and Fan (2020), about 94% of facial injuries result from incidences of domestic abuse. Some women have also been reported to have paid the ultimate price of death as a result of domestic violence (Yoo-Mi & Scott, 2019). According to Nittis, Hughes, Gray, Ashton (2013), one in every four women who was presented in the emergency department in Australia has experienced domestic violence in her life. Hence, domestic abuse is a major health challenge that must be given serious attention globally. In doing this, therefore, the need to determine the remote causes and implications of domestic violence cannot be overemphasized. More attention also needs to be given to rural areas where a lot of domestic violence go unnoticed or unreported due to the strong impact of patriarchal dominance and other cultural interpretations of the role of a man in disciplining members of his household (Adomako Ampofo, &Prah, 2009).

Furthermore, Katembo (2015) and Makama (2013) stated that women's economic dependence on men is one of the major causes of domestic violence. However, Ajayi and Airewele, (2018) observed that some women who are economically independent still experience domestic abuse from their spouses. Hence, domestic violence is used as a tool to control and restore the superiority of men over women despite women's seemingly economic affluence (Ajayi &Airewele, (2018). Furthermore, Gillum (2019) posited that although domestic violence is prevalent across race, socio-economic status, age, geography and sexual orientation, it is higher among poor communities. To Gillum (2019), poverty increases the incidences of domestic abuse among individuals, families, and communities and is excessively experienced by black communities in both developed and developing countries. This study, however, found that apart from economic dependence, cultural practices such as early marriage, bride price and religion, among others, contribute significantly to domestic violence, especially in the rural areas.

Customary laws in Nigeria, like in most other African countries, stipulate that the man is superior to the woman, and as such, he reserves the right to discipline her (Okigbo, 2015, Anyanwu & Anyanwu, 2017). These laws are sacrosanct especially in rural areas and clearly explain why reports of intimate partner violence could be treated with levity. Hence, many women endure domestic abuse, while others do not even recognize that they have been abused (Adomako Ampofo&Prah, 2009).

Adjah and Agbemafle (2016) observed that many women suffer significant psychological abuse including threats, insults, and destruction of property, among others, as a result of domestic violence. One of the major implications of this heinous act is that oftentimes domestic violence is witnessed by the children (Reif (kay), Jaffe, Dawson, Lee-Straatman, (2020), and this study worries that these horrifying experiences may have negative implications in the life of such children (lngutia Anthony, Sumelius 2020).

While Belich, Nnwanne, Cornelius, Sam-Agudu, (2017) focused on domestic violence on rural women who are HIV-Positive, Fagbamigbe, et al.2017, Kalunta-Crumpton, 2013, Ezebialu, Nwora, Eke, 2010), on focused on domestic violence in urban and semi-urban areas, this study, however provided a bridge in the lacuna on research on causes and implications of domestic violence among rural women generally with specific reference to Kuje, Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Radical and Black feminist theoretical perspectives were employed in this study. Radical feminism is one of the theories founded on the belief that society is based on patriarchal grounds, which creates the marginalization and discrimination of women (Teasley, 2020; Fitch, James, &Motion 2016). This theory was developed during the second wave of feminism in the 1960s. Radical feminists posit that the main source of women's oppression originates from social roles and institutional structures being constructed from male supremacy and patriarchy (Teasley, 2020). Unlike other feminist theories, radical feminism advocates for the complete elimination of patriarchy through the transformation of the entire structure of the society, with particular focus on the eradication of traditional gender roles.

To the radical feminist, male domination causes all forms of human operation, including racism and classism (Haryanti&Suwana, 2014). To them, the root of patriarchy is traceable to women's childbearing and child rearing responsibilities, which makes them dependent on men. They see men's oppression of women as deliberate, and this ideological justification for such subordination is supported by institutions such as media and religion (Mattingly, 2019). For

women to be to be liberated, radical feminism advocates for the abolition of patriarchy. If institutions are currently gendered, alternative institutions such as women's organizations seeking better health care, day care, and shelters for victims of domestic violence and rape should be developed to meet women's needs (Teasley, 2020).

Similarly, Black feminism is of the view that the experiences of Black women give rise to a particular understanding of their position in relation to sexism, class oppression, and racism (Mirza, 2015). To Black feminists, the experiences of being a Black woman cannot be grasped through sociocultural constructions of race alone but must be explicated through intersectionality—a term coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989 (Taylor 2015). This theoretical perspective illuminates the interlocking roles of white supremacy and patriarchy that inform the particular experiences of enslaved Black women. Black feminists are concerned with how systems of power are configured around maintaining socially constructed categories of race, gender, class and sexuality in particular. (Taylor 2015).

In relation to this study, domestic violence is another clear manifestation of the dominance and marginalization of women by men. Findings from this study aligned with the perspectives of the Radical and Black feminists that domestic violence has persisted because the patriarchal system inherent in the study area is used to support the operation of women and helps men to maintain control. Intimate partner violence could, therefore, be likened to white dominance of the blacks and racism. In line with the Black feminist perspective, this study posits that economic dependence of women on men is one of the major determinants of domestic violence (Ajayi & Airewele, 2018) and as the Black feminist suggests, there is a need to attack racism, sexism, and most importantly, poverty in the context of this study (Taylor 2015).

Patriarchy operates via the gender division of labor in the household, which forces women to take primary responsibility for housework and childcare even if they are also in full-time employment (Barry & Grady 2018). Women may be trapped in unsatisfactory marriages because they are unable to find well-paying jobs to support themselves and their children. Furthermore, gender inequality, which is perpetrated and supported by patriarchy, is seen as the basis of violence against women, and the social institutions of marriage and family are special contexts that may promote, maintain, and even support men's use of physical force against women.

Methodology

The study method was triangulated, using both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. While the quantitative data was elicited with the use of questionnaires, qualitative data was captured using in-depth interview (IDI). The population comprises women of different ages and status (old and young, married and single) resident in Kuje, a very rural community in the suburb of Abuja, Nigeria, with several incidences of domestic violence. Kuje was chosen for this study because it is known for strong adherence to cultural practices such as early marriage, payment of dowry, land ownership and religion, among others, which often support domestic violence against women. In this study, the stratified sampling technique was used to select respondents. For a representative sample, the women were stratified into residential and commercial areas. The residential areas were further stratified into 10 clusters comprising 10 compounds each. Then simple random sampling was used to select 10 women from each of the compounds, (1 per compound), making a total of 100 respondents from the residential area. Similarly, the commercial area was clustered into 5 streets and 10 women were randomly selected from each street, making a total of 50 respondents from the commercial area. A total of 150

respondents participated in the study. Hundred participants were selected from the residential area because many of the indigenes of Kuje live in this area, while the fewer people who were predominantly migrants live in the commercial area.

Ten women leaders were selected for IDI, with one woman representing a cluster. These women leaders were selected based on their position as leaders who receive complaints or reports of domestic abuse from their subjects. These women were interviewed at their homes, mainly in the evenings after their daily business activities. The data collection was conducted within a period of three months. Data collection was conducted using trained research assistants, who translated the questions into Hausa, as some of the women were illiterates. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was deployed to run the analysis. Data was analyzed using percentages and frequency counts for quantitative data, while content analysis was used for qualitative data. To find the relationship between the variables and test of hypotheses, chi-square computation was also used.

Results
Socio-demographic Characteristics

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Age		
	8	6.2
15-19	34	26.2
20-24	31 1	23.8
25-29	57	43.8
30 and above	**130**	**100.0**
Total		
Occupation		
	27	20.8
Businesswoman	12	9.2
civil servant	15	11.5
Public servant	6	4.6
Student	45	34.6
Housewife	25	19.2
Others	**130**	**100.0**
Total		
Qualification		
Non- formal	35	26.9
Primary	20	15.4
Secondary	42	32.3
Tertiary	33	25.4
Total	**130**	**100.0**

Source: (Author's computation, 2016)

Table 1 revealed that 6.2 % of respondents were between the ages of 15-19years, and 26.2 % were within 20 and 24years. Respondents between 25 and 29 years were 23.8 %, and 43.8 % were 30 years and above. This implies that a larger percentage of the respondents who participated in the study belonged to age bracket 30 and above. Similarly, while 20.8 % of the respondents were businesswomen, 9.2 % were civil servants, 11.5% were public servants, 4.6 % were students, 34.6 % were housewives and 19.2% of the respondents engage in other occupations. The results indicated that the majority of respondents were housewives. This could explain why they were readily available at the time of the study, as they do not have formal places of work. They were also in a better position to give genuine responses because they stay at home and mostly do not have any means of economic independence; they are predominantly dependent on their husbands, and this makes them susceptible to domestic abuse. On the highest educational level, 26.9% of the respondents had no formal education, 15.4% had primary education, and 32.3% had secondary education, while 25.4% of the respondents had tertiary education. From the distribution, it can be deduced that respondents who attained a secondary level of education participated more in the study.

Causes of Domestic Violence

Table 2: Distribution of Respondent by Causes of Domestic Violence

Categories	Frequency	Percent
The role of economic dependence of women on men and domestic violence		
Women's economic dependence causes domestic violence	107	82.3
Women's economic dependence does not cause domestic violence	23	17.7
Total	**130**	**100.0**
Community's tolerance of some abusive behavior as normal/cultural		
My community tolerates abusive behavior	68	52.3
My community does not tolerate abusive behavior	62	47.7
Total	**130**	**100.0**
Cultural values that support domestic violence		
Early marriage	57	43.8
Bride price	24	18.5
Religion	20	15.4
Others	29	22.3
Total	**130**	**100.0**

The role of religious and traditional beliefs on the persistence of domestic violence		
Religious and traditional beliefs encourage persistence of domestic violence	80	61.5
Religious and traditional beliefs do not encourage persistence of domestic violence	50	38.5
Total	**130**	**100.0**
The role patriarchy places on domestic violence against women	99	76.2
Patriarchy places women under domestic violence	31	23.8
Patriarchy does not place women under domestic violence	**130**	**100.0**
Total		

Source: (Author's computation, 2016)

Table 2 above shows that 82.3 % of these rural women agreed that economic dependence of women on men contributes to domestic violence. This indicates that a larger number of respondents perceived that the economic dependence of women on men contributes to domestic violence. A respondent interviewed also corroborated this assertion:

If a woman does not have anything doing to assist her husband in the home, she can be open to domestic abuse because the husband might get tired of doing certain things and might start abusing or beating her. (Source: IDI (2016)

Another respondent also said:

Socialization, which entails how one is brought up, is another major cause of domestic violence against women. Most of us are brought up to believe men are superior, so they treat us anyhow and the community sees nothing bad about it. Also, poverty, sexual matters, substance abuse, illiteracy, disrespect, jealousy, lack of understanding, infidelity and many others could make a man beat his wife or even daughter. (Source: IDI (2016)

Yet another respondent said:

Women being beaten by their husband's is considered normal here. Sometimes you don't even have anyone to report to and other times some women are afraid to report violence against them–when everybody sees it as normal and nobody is fighting against it. A lot of women are helpless in the rural areas. (Source: IDI (2016)

On the community's tolerance of some abusive behavior, Table 2 also indicates that 52.3% of the respondents believed that their community encourages and tolerates some abusive

behavior, as they perceive it as normal and cultural. This implies that some cultural practices in this rural area under study premise domestic violence against women.

Similarly, on the role of cultural values that support domestic violence, Table 2 reveals that 43.8% of the respondents were of the opinion that the practice of early marriage contributes to violent acts against women, while 18.5 % of the respondents posited that payment of bride price supports and encourages domestic violence. Similarly, 15.4 % of the respondents believed that religion supports and encourages domestic violence while 22.3% considered other cultural values asides early marriage, bride price, and religion as contributing to and supporting domestic violence.

Findings on the role of religious and traditional beliefs on the persistence of domestic violence show that 61.5% of the respondents were of the opinion that religious and traditional beliefs contribute to the persistence of domestic violence, while 38.5% posited that religious and traditional beliefs do not contribute to the persistence of domestic violence. On the role of patriarchy on domestic violence, the table shows that 76.2 % of the respondents were of the opinion that patriarchy creates situations of domestic violence. By implication, the majority of the respondents believed that patriarchy creates social structures such as family and society in general that contribute to domestic violence. A respondent interviewed also stated that:

Patriarchy promotes domestic violence against women through the male preferential treatment set by social settings like the family and the society as a whole. (Source: IDI 2016)

Another respondent also said:

Patriarchy creates situations of domestic violence against women because some men believe they dominate in all spheres of the society and when they give orders they should be obeyed. However, when they are not obeyed; they tend to use force or violence to command obedience. (Source: IDI 2016)

This corroborates assertions of the Black feminism that patriarchy is crucial for an understanding of gender inequality. Patriarchy operates via the gendered division of labor in the household, which forces women to take primary responsibility for housework and childcare, even if they are also in full-time employment. Many women are trapped in unsatisfactory marriages because they are unable to find well-paying jobs to support themselves and their children. These responses imply that some of these rural women are compelled against their wish to obey their husband's orders.

Implications of Domestic Violence

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Implications of domestic violence

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Children of domestic violent homes model their behavior according to their experiences		
Children will model after domestic violence experience	110	84.6
Children will not model after domestic violence experience	20	15.4
Total	130	100.0
Mortality rate, stress, depression, child abuse, rape and broken marriages as negative implications of domestic violence		
They are implications of domestic violence	120	92.3
They are not implications of domestic violence	10	7.7
Total	130	100.0
Impact of domestic violence on women's freedom		
Domestic violence impedes women's freedom	120	92.3
Domestic violence does not impede women's freedom	10	7.7
Total	130	100.0
Assertions that wife beating is a sign of love		
Wife beating is a sign of love	2	1.5
Wife beating is not a sign of love	128	98.5
Total	130	100.0

Source: (Author's computation, 2016)

On the various implications of domestic violence, Table 3 reveals that 84.6% of the respondents–majority of the study population–agreed that children of domestic violent homes will model their behavior according to their experiences. A respondent further explained that:

> *Growing up in an abusive environment is what makes a person enjoy and is amused when another person is being beaten, slapped or is generally ill-treated.* (Source: IDI (2016)

Another respondent also said:

It makes a person happy and excited about engaging in any form of wicked deed or acts, acts that bring about pain and sadness to another individual. (Source: IDI (2016)

Similarly, 92.3% of the respondents—a significantly large number—perceived increased mortality rates, stress, depression, child abuse, rape, and broken marriages as negative effects of domestic violence.

A woman leader who was further interviewed on the other effects of domestic violence said:

The implication of domestic violence is not limited to the women but can also be seen on the children as well. For instance, children who see their mothers being abused are likely to have cases of mental disorders, develop emotional problems, school difficulties, aggressive behavior, and low self-esteem. (Source: IDI (2016)

On the impact of domestic violence on women's freedom, Table 3 shows that 92.3% of respondents—majority of the study population—were of the opinion that domestic violence deprives women of their freedom, while 7.7 % posited that domestic violence does not deprive women of their freedom. Additionally, Table 3 also indicated that 98.5 % of the respondents– majority of the study population—did not consider wife beating as a sign of love.

Table 4: Cross Tabulation of Cultural and Religious Practices and the Causes of Domestic Violence

		Percentage distribution by cultural and religious practices				Total
		Early marriage	Bride price	Religion	Others	
Percentage of respondents on the role of patriarchy on domestic violence against women	Yes	44	21	16	18	99
	No	13	3	4	11	31
	Total	57	24	20	29	130

$$X^2 c = 5.066 > X^2 t(0.05) = 7.815, df = 3, n = 130$$

That is:

Expected observed chi-square (X^2) = 5.066, degree of freedom (df) = 3, N = 130
Significant probability level P = 7.815

Decision rule: from the calculation, the chi-square value for the relationship between the causes of domestic violence and dominant cultural practices was obtained at 5.066 with the degree of freedom of 3 and a significant level of 7.815. This shows that the obtained X^2 value of 5.066 is significant at 7.815, since this figure is greater than the calculated value (5.066). The hypothesis is accepted as stated; it follows that the relationship between the causes of domestic violence and dominant cultural practices is not significant. In other words, it implies that domestic violence can also occur regardless of these cultural practices. This could be as a result of certain cultural and religious practices which are not being considered as aiding domestic violence.

Table 5: Cross Tabulation of Psychological and Negative Effects of Domestic Violence

		Negative effects of domestic violence		Total
		Yes	No	
Percentage distribution by psychological implications of domestic Violence	Yes	97	3	100
	No	23	7	30
	Total	120	10	130

X^2 c =13.437 > X^2 t (0.05) = 3.841, df = 1, n= 130

That is:

X^2 = 13.437, df = 1, Significant probability level = 3.841, N= 130

Table 5 shows that the chi-square value for the implication of domestic violence on the psychological well-being of women was obtained at 13.437 with a degree of freedom of 1 and a significant level of 3.841. This shows that the obtained X^2 value of 13.437 is significant at 3.841. Since the critical value is less than the calculated value (13.437), the hypothesis is accepted as stated; that is, domestic violence has serious psychological implications on women. This result supports previous literature which says that domestic violence has been directly linked to numerous kinds of immediate and long-term physical and psychological injury to women (Tunbalawony, Daulima, Susantic (2019), Reif (kay), Jaffe, Dawson, Lee-Straatman, (2020).

Discussion of Findings
The major causes of domestic violence against women in rural communities include economic dependence of women on men, community's tolerance of abusive behaviors, cultural values that support domestic violence, such as early marriage and bride price, among others. This is also consistent with the findings of Ajayi and Airewele (2018). These rural women who had little or no educational qualification naturally occupied the lower socio-economic status. They had to depend on their husbands for virtually all of their needs. This positions them at the mercy of

their husbands, who out of financial constraints and frustrations, may begin to beat their wives. This corroborates the findings of Gillum (2019) and Ebun (2013), among others, that there is no doubt that the high level of poverty and socio-economic challenges in the country have contributed in no small measure to the prevalence of domestic violence in Nigeria. To Gillman (2019), Black women who find themselves in the bottom of the economic stratum are more vulnerable to intimate partner violence. This study, therefore, posits that there is a need for more rural women to be economically empowered, to avert violence by their spouses. This is also consistent with the feminist perspective that gender inequality, which is occasioned by patriarchy, is the basis for violence against women, and the social institutions of marriage and family are special contexts that may promote, maintain, and even support men's use of physical force against women. Similarly, in line with the proponents of Black feminism, domestic violence in the study area could also be attributed to the assumed superiority of men over the women.

There are also indications that a large number of the study population is of the opinion that religious and traditional beliefs contribute to the persistence of domestic violence as most religion preach total submission; hence the role and place of a woman is ignored, even when the man is wrong and the woman has a genuine case to be heard. This also confirms the findings of Ihalainen, Schure, Sola, (2020), Igbolekwu & Nwokocha, (2019), and Ebun (2013) on the impact of culture and religion on individual perceptions and the fact that most women are forced to accept cultural practices irrespective of its (cultural practice) negative impact on them. Also, religion has conferred on men superior power over women, which gives men reasons to exercise authority over women. This is consistent with the Black feminist perspective. All the religions practiced in Nigeria encourage women to endure the atrocities of men and keep their homes. Most of the religions profess that women are "home-makers" at all cost, even in the wake of violence against them. Traditionally, women's opinions are insignificant in many important cultural issues; they are not allowed to be present at some meetings. Also, cases of domestic violence are rampant because most of the women are encouraged to respect tradition, even when it is harmful or cruel.

Similarly, the study revealed that there are other numerous causes of domestic violence, such as socialization, poverty, sexual matters, substance abuse, illiteracy, disrespect, jealousy, lack of understanding, infidelity, and early marriage, among others (Yoo-Mi& Scott, 2019). For instance, early marriage, which is very prevalent among the studied group and the Hausa/Fulani of the Northern Nigeria (Amodu, Salami, &Richter, 2017), generally has so many negative effects and particularly supports domestic abuse because some of the girls are not experienced and mentally capable to run a home and are often uneducated, which makes them predominantly dependent on their husbands economically, and this can trigger domestic abuse because quarrels may arise on the basis of house maintenance (Fagbamigbe, Akintayo, Oshodi, Makinde, Babalola, et al, 2017;Tenkorang, 2019).

Furthermore, the findings from this study are in line with the position of Anna and Wang (2011) who posits that the social context of violence against women in Nigeria is related to traditional African patriarchal society, which became layered with colonial power structures while eradicating some precolonial pathways towards women's empowerment which defines the gendered power structure. Anna and Wang (2011) posited that it is only through improving the economic condition of women who are mostly dependent on small and medium enterprises that women could be helped to leave unhappy marriages especially in strong patriarchal societies. Again, this assertion complements the proponents of the Radical and Black feminist perspective on patriarchy. By implication, the patriarchal nature of the African society will continue to serve

as bedrock for the superiority of the male folk over women. Unfortunately, this cultural practice has experienced little or no influence by civilization or education.

It is also disturbing to note that many of the women studied do not know if they have been abused or not. Correspondingly, Franzway (2016) and Amodu, Salami & Richter (2017) also found that many women are unable to characterize their conditions as abusive. Again, this could be due to the acceptance of some abusive behavior as 'normal'.

This study also discovered that some women do not always like to report cases of abuse for fear of stigmatization and revenge from abusers and some do not have anyone to report incidences of violence to. This study is in line with the findings of Fagbamigbe, et al (2017), Olofinbiyi, Akintayo, Ade-Ojo, Atiba, Olaogun & Oluwadiya (2013), Amnesty International (2012), among others, which revealed that Nigeria is among one of the countries recording high incidences of female domestic abuse in sub-Sahara Africa, where two-thirds of women are found to be suffering male partner violence and are often scared of reporting the issue because of the fear of negative social stereotyping that may arise. This study, therefore, beams light on the plight of these rural women who may have been undergoing different forms of abuse and domestic violence.

On the implication of domestic violence on women, the study discovered that domestic violence deprives women of their freedom to participate or engage in activities of their choice. It was also discovered that domestic violence has psychological effects on women, which could bring about low self-esteem, self-isolation, self-pity, depression, and aggression. It also revealed other effects which could result to divorce, inferiority complex, suicide, insanity, and timidity.

Domestic violence deprives women of their freedom and their fundamental human rights. According to DFID (2007), it is the most widespread and socially tolerated way in which women and girls are denied their basic rights. Domestic violence deprives women of their freedom and right to take part in social life and places them under the exceptional conditions set by social settings like the family, societal norms, kinship groups, among others (Anna and Wang 2011).

Furthermore, this study also revealed that intimate partner violence impacts negatively on children from domestic violent homes. For instance, children who see their mothers being abused are likely to be traumatized, to develop emotional problems, school difficulties, aggressive behavior, and low self-esteem. This corroborated the findings of Forke, Catallozzi, Locallio, Grisso Wiebe, & Fein (2019) that emphasized that witnessing domestic violence during childhood is associated with diverse negative mental, physical and behavioral health outcomes during childhood. Similarly, Ireland and Smith (2009) also posited that children who witness domestic violence are at risk of poor school performance, cognitive delay, emotional and behavioral issues, trauma symptoms, and mental health diagnoses in childhood. Also, male children are most likely to internalize and replicate the act of domestic violence on their future partners. This implies that domestic violence constitutes a major health challenge not only to the victims but also to the witnesses who in most cases are the children of the victims.

Findings from this study support the assertion made by Fagbamigbe, et al (2017) and Olofinbiyi, et al (2013) that domestic violence has been directly linked to numerous kinds of immediate and long-term physical and psychological injury to women. The study revealed that domestic violence inflicts both physical and psychological injury on the rural women studied and by extension, women generally.

Limitation of the Study

Findings from this study show that domestic violence is a major social and public health challenge. Particularly, several cases of intimate partner violence go unnoticed in the rural areas. One of the major limitations of this study is its inability to cover all the rural areas in Nigeria. The study, therefore, suggests that further studies on domestic violence be extended to other rural areas in Nigeria. The study also fails to compare the prevalence of domestic violence among urban and rural areas as well as among different cultural groups. Since the focus of this study was on the causes and implications of domestic violence, it is suggested that further studies should focus on the treatment of domestic violence among other ethnic groups in Nigeria. Further studies should also examine the dynamics of British colonial patriarchy and the subjugation of women in pre-colonial African societies. This will bring to the fore the various forms and patterns of patriarchal relationships in both pre- and post-colonial African societies.

Conclusion

This study has identified the major causes and implications of domestic violence against women in rural communities. Among other issues, the study demonstrated that some of these rural women are helpless, without anybody to report to or afraid to report cases of violence against them. Thus, there are high incidences of unreported cases of domestic violence against these rural women. This is all the more so because religion and traditions/cultural practices of these rural communities are synchronized to assimilate domestic violence against women. Many women have lost their lives as a result of domestic violence, and more women may still die or suffer psychological, physical and emotional depression, especially those who are entangled by the culture of silence. Therefore, there is the need for an increased advocacy for eradication of domestic violence against women in the rural communities. Such advocacies should incorporate elements of local cultural norms and values for trust and acceptability by the entire community.

Recommendations

There is need to focus and intensify advocacies for domestic violence against women in the rural communities. These advocacy groups should employ more practical and appropriate communication mechanisms peculiar to each rural area. Particularly, the use of indigenous languages to form songs, playlets, and proverbs, among other means, to communicate the implications of domestic violence against women in their communities, should be encouraged. Jingles about cultural practices that are inimical to women should be advertised on local radio and television stations in indigenous languages. This will help to increase people's consciousness of such harmful cultural norms and practices.

Community leaders, religious leaders, and women groups who are closer to these rural women should be used by advocacy groups and the government to create awareness and sensitization campaigns on domestic violence. These leaders, with strong support from the government, should ensure that rural women who report cases of domestic abuse are adequately protected from the perpetrators.

Rural women who are unemployed should be empowered economically in terms of training and skills, such as tailoring, trading, crafts, and hairdressing, in order for them to be self-reliant and economically independent of men. This will go a long way in alleviating the plight of many helpless rural women.

Compliance with Ethical Standard
Ethical Approval
All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Specifically, ethical approval for this study was obtained from Landmark University Ethical Review Committee. Ethical considerations were duly observed, as respondents were informed, and their consent forms were obtained. Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were guaranteed and adhered to. Those without formal western education had the content translated to them in the locally spoken Hausa language. Respondents were also informed that they had the right to withdraw at any time they felt uncomfortable with the study.

Consent to Participate:
Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Consent to Publish:
Consent to publish was also obtained from the participants.

Competing Interests
There were no competing interests and as such:

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Authors' Contributions
1. Author Chisaa Onyekachi Igbolekwu conceived the idea of conducting the research and also wrote and compiled the paper.
2. Author OgadimmaArisukwu worked on the data analysis and interpretation of data.
3. Author Joseph Nkemakolam Nwogu collected the data and sourced for all ethical approval.
4. Author Rasak Bamidele edited the paper and wrote the conclusion and recommendations.
5. Author Festus Asamu assisted and supervised the data collection and analysis.
6. Osueke Ngozi anchored the field work.

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