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Affirming the Traditional Teaching of Imbusa as a Tool against Gender-based Violence

By Mukuka SK¹

Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to provide light on the traditional teaching of Imbusa, which is utilized to combat the problem of gender-based violence. Violence against women has increased to incredible rates in modern societies, to the point where many women continue to perpetuate anguish in the form of physical abuse, assaults, and molestation, and all these social evils have left women badly devastated, scared, disoriented, and defenceless. Violence entails the use of physical force, such as sexual assault, to injure, mutilate, or kill humans, and occasionally to ruin an individual's life. This paper examines several forms of gender-based violence and the traditional teaching of Imbusa regarding gender violence. The study will also show how this teaching style fosters and strengthens positive relationships between partners in the home.

Keywords: Imbusa, tool, indigenous, violence, self-Image

Introduction

This paper seeks to bring to light the traditional teaching of Imbusa¹, which is used as a tool to curb the problem of gender-based violence. Violence against women has escalated to unprecedented levels in contemporary societies, so much so that many women continue to experience the pain through various forms such as beatings, rapes, and incest, and all these vices have left women severely traumatized, maimed, disoriented, and vulnerable. Violence involves the application of physical force, such as rape, which is used to hurt, damage, or kill a person, and sometimes to destroy one's self-image. The paper explores various forms of gender-based violence while examining the traditional teaching of Imbusa within the context of gender violence. The study will also highlight how healthy relationships are enhanced and consolidated between couples in a home through this teaching method. The article is divided into two parts. While the first part brings out the definition of gender-based violence by focusing on the common forms such as violence against women and girls, the second part explores the traditional teaching of Imbusa, and how gender-based violence is addressed within the parameters of this traditional teaching. Particular attention is placed on the relevance of traditional and indigenous teachings that specifically address gender-based violence in the process of initiation. The paper concludes with the observation that traditional teaching can be one of the most effective tools to fight gender-based violence in a matrimonial home with its emphasis on the mutual relationships between the two genders.

Understanding Gendered Violence

Gender-based violence, commonly known as intimate partner abuse, is a negative occurrence in many societies around the world. It is recognized globally as a grave social and human rights concern that many have experienced at various stages of their lives. This global

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issue has affected women of every age, all races, and social status. As observed by Heise Ellsberg and Gohhemoeller (1999), Rashida Manjoo (2015, p. 15), and Leigh Goodmark (2006, p. 3), gendered violence as an international problem affects one in three women who have been beaten, coerced into sex, or abused in their lifetime. It is known to be one of the pervasive and widespread human rights violations, as noted by the World Health Organization's 2013 report (Manjoo, 2015, p. 15). It is also observed that most of the victims who have experienced violence are left with very serious psychological trauma. According to Patrizia Romito (2008, p. 8), those who have experienced violence are left wounded, such that sometimes they are left with no choice but to succumb to it. Besides, gendered violence is a phenomenon known to be pushed by economic and social factors, which increase gender inequalities, and women seem to be the worst victims of this aggravating inequality.

Some societies are more affected by gender-based violence than others. Different societies in the world are judged depending on the way they perceive and respond to acts of violence. Besides, Romito (2008, p. 12) notes that the definitions of violence differ from one society to another, and those children are abused more in a certain socio-cultural context than in another, partly due to differences in the definition of concepts. And rightly put by Annette Burfoot and Susan Lord (2006, p. viii), to understand gendered violence precisely, it is imperative that it be addressed within the context in which the phenomenon of intimate partner abuse is named. In her example, Romito (2008, p. 12) contends that the definition of the child may be considered between the ages of 12 and 18 in some contexts, partly by how society understands the status of children. Gender-based violence is an act in which individuals or groups are targeted based on their gender, and something which goes beyond immediate physical damage to the victims. Elena Machetti (2019, p. 15) also describes the gendered nature of partner violence as the act which is often used to characterize the type of domestic and family violence, thus substantiating the fact that gendered violence can also be defined in many ways.

It is often noted that women and children are the victims, who suffer much more than men (Machetti, 2019, p. 15). On the other hand, Ceri Hayes (2007), basing her gendered violence definition on the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women report, notes that gender-based violence includes any acts of physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, threats of such acts, and coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether in public or private life. Within the context of gender-based violence, other acts of violence include the pushing of women, slapping, beating, repeatedly wounding, burning, and strangling. Similarly, Dawn Bradley Berry (1998), concurring with Sariola and Uutela (1992), asserts that physical abuse includes choking, throwing things, locking a person outside of the house, restraining, and other acts designed to injure, hurt, endanger, or cause physical pain. Further, Berry (1998) also exposes some of the effects of violence that are physically, sexually, and emotionally demeaning and extremely detrimental to the integrity and wellbeing of a woman.

More so, sexual abuse may include forcing a woman into reproductive decisions that are contrary to her wishes or forcing her into having sex without any protection against diseases or pregnancy (Berry, 1998). It is clearly evident that this kind of gendered violence is very common and prevalent in patriarchal societies, especially in African communities where the belief system is that the virility of a man is pronounced through having male children. In this context, the sexuality of women is controlled through forced sex, and if a woman is unable to produce a male child, it is a matter of shame for her. This is equally noted by Ellsberg and Gohhemoeller (1999), who argue that all these violent acts, when critically analysed, have a very negative and profound impact not only on the victims, but also on many other facets of society. It is observed that violence against women is done through humiliation and belittling of their capabilities, be it in public or within the confinement of

their homes, and sometimes in the presence of the members of the family. Sariola and Uutela (1992) also concur with the view that women suffer violent and demeaning acts almost submissively, as they are constantly threatened and terrorized by patriarchal society. Within the family setup, women are forced to leave their jobs and remain confined within the four walls of domesticity.

In some instances, women have limited access to outside interaction and socialization, as their movements are often curtailed. Visiting friends and relatives is not often permissible in such a repressive structure. Besides, women are drawn into forced and unwanted sexual acts, coupled with violent threats, blackmail, and the employment of physical force, such as beatings. On the other hand, Carol Grothues, and Shelly Marmion (2006) argue that gendered violence also includes financial deprivation. This is where a woman is rendered vulnerable in a relationship, as a man chooses to control the finances and provides necessary living expenses of his own will. This kind of behaviour is detrimental to the well-being of women. It is also demeaning and destructive because it crushes a woman's self-esteem and her sense of confidence. It has been observed that gendered violence appears in many other forms. Sometimes, the act is subtle in appearance as it is hardly noticed, and it is often difficult to make a fine distinction. Other forms of gender-based violence, which are common in repressive patriarchal societies, include rape, incest, sexual molestation, and the use of physical force in the forms of a severe beating, insulting, and shoving. In such a repressive society, a notion is deeply embedded that women are like ornaments that can be owned. The prevalence of such repressive patriarchal values allows the perpetrators to see women as objects that can be used for sexual satisfaction. Merrill Smith (2004) points out that some of the reasons have an air of familiarity and characteristics of assumed patriarchal rights to female sexuality. In this context, therefore, a community should consider the levels of gendered violence prevalent in society, and it should become a moral responsibility of communities to condemn the acts of violence. Due to the vulnerable position of a woman in society, as noted by Leigh Goodmark (2015, p. 9), men feel free to abuse women, and the communities refuse to condemn their behaviour. Various governmental institutions are also freed of the responsibility to address abuses against women in such societies.

Noting further, Goodmark (2015, p. 9) argues that even laws and policies are meaningless without the societal will to enforce them. Other significant painful observations unmasked by Romito (2008, p. 13) include the sufferings of those women whose lives of vulnerability begin even before their birth, as they go through the painful selective abortions of female babies. In these kinds of societies, female feticide is a serious problem that seems to be getting worse. In this context, Romito (2008, pp. 13-15) notes that violence against children begins at the time of their conception in some countries. As having a female child is perceived to be a misfortune, the life of a female baby is subjugated even before conception. The effect of violence suffered by a female infant beginning within an embryo is a discriminatory termination of life in preference to the survival of a male foetus. If a baby is detected to be female, it may be killed through the process of abortion. Thus, a girl experiences early childhood traumas such as infanticide, selective neglect in care, and physical, sexual, and psychological violence (2008, pp. 13-15). Later, Romito (2008, p. 13) also observes that a female child becomes more vulnerable when she is forced into early marriage, mutilation, child prostitution, and pornography. Because of economic necessity, a girl is exposed to forced sexual relationships and violent courtships during her adolescence and adulthood. For instance, this is noticeable in many African societies, where we observe the rampant prevalence of the dowry system, (lobola). A man feels financially deprived if his demands are not met by the parents of the girl, and, as a result, he often resorts to violence as a means of compensating for his loss of dowry. Sometimes a girl is forced into marriage to an

older person because of this financial need. Romito (2008, p. 13) also notes that an adult widow is often murdered or forced to commit suicide upon the demise of her spouse.

Susan Brownmiller (1975) argues that rape and incest are consciously used as tools to keep women in a state of fear and intimidation in such societies. All these atrocities are grave violations of the rights of women and children. In fact, it can be argued that a common factor in these human injustices committed against women is that the aggressors are, in most cases, male relatives, husbands, brothers, uncles, grandfathers, or fiancés. Therefore, it can be noted that there are different types of gender-based violence, and these types vary according to different social contexts. Psychological, economic, physical, and sexual violence committed by one partner to the other is validated by different cultural norms in such societies. In this context, Brownmiller (1975) argues that gender violence is more predominantly committed against women than against men. Schwartz (1997) and Ruth Gilbert (2006, p. 10) argue that the most efficient way in which violence can be detected is by employing a broader understanding of the problem within the contexts of biological, psychological, socio-cultural, environmental, and structural levels, and focusing on the individual, community, and societal perspectives on such issues. Manjoo (2015, p. 15) also explicates the idea that gendered violence is deeply rooted in multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequality, and that it is a reflection and reinforcement of the subordination and oppression to which women are subjected in public or private spaces. For instance, looking at the position of women in previous centuries, Sylvie Frigon (2006, p. 13) and Manjoo (2015, p. 20) contend that a woman was not a legal person in the eyes of the law in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And so, she was required to be submissive and obey her husband, and those women who broke this norm were paid heavily.

In another context, Manjoo (2015, p. 15), agreeing with Gilbert (2006, p. 10), also argues that violence against women cannot be fully understood without regard to interpersonal, institutional, and structural manifestations of violence, as these form the reality of women's lives in many instances. As mentioned earlier, the problem of gendered violence is so immense that dealing with issues pertaining to violence often raises questions that require deeper reflection. The gravity and extent of violence that many victims experience demand a serious interrogatory approach regarding why particular behaviours of people aggravate the problems of rape, incest, and domestic violence (2006, p. 10). This observation is equally emphasized by Romito (2008, pp. 12-13), who argues that it is essentially important and necessary to assess the frequency, characteristics, and consequences of such gender-based violence to eradicate them from society. Therefore, perceiving issues of gender-based violence within a particular context requires a critical eye in examining the phenomenon of violence. This is because of the subtle and disguised way these violent acts happen, and how society responds to them. It becomes very helpful for society to make better judgments based on a much clearer and more comprehensive assessment of the underlying causes and effects of such behaviour, and the effects on the victims of such crimes. This is the reason why Rebecca Surtee (2006) opines that "what is critical in gender-based violence and uncovering this glaring social problem is one thing, accounting for it and addressing it in an appropriate way is another. For a better understanding and redressing the problem of gender-based violence, it is critical that we analyse and understand the cultural terrain upon which this violence occurs" (2006, p. 56).

Moreover, Manjoo (2015, p. 16) opines that the issues of rape and incest remain concerns for many families and societies around the world. However, in the 21st century, the definitions of gender-based violence have been interpolated due to the formation of human rights movements that are advocating for the reinforcement of laws and stiffer penalties for individuals involved in acts of rape, incest, and domestic violence (2015, p. 16). The Advocacy at the Mexico and Copenhagen World Conferences on women served as catalysts

for the 1985 General Assembly resolution on domestic violence (United Nations General Assembly 1985). All these meetings, Manjoo (2015, p. 16) notes, presented deliberations on ways of strengthening and enforcing legislation prohibiting violence against women, and taking appropriate administrative, social, and educational measures to protect women from all forms of physical and mental violence. For instance, the General Assembly (1993) recognized the position and rights of women in society through its affirmation that women must be respected and granted their fundamental freedom. Violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relationship between men and women. This was a very significant approach to recognizing the position of women in society. In this context, it can be said that violence against women is an abrogation of the nature of God's creation, particularly when women are rendered vulnerable and susceptible to various kinds of violence in society.

Besides, Smith (2004) also contends that rape affects the evolution and development of cultures all over the world. In her analysis, Gilbert (2006, p. 10) provides more insight than violent behaviour by an individual is an innate human response to a loss of honour and self-respect. And that, if violence is to be curbed, society should adopt a medical model that presents violence as a disease that is caused by factors that affect the biological, psychological, and social systems. It is obvious that rape is committed by individuals in particular physical places, where they can hide from the laws of society (Smith, 2004, p. 6).

Imbusa: The Traditional Indigenous Teaching against Gender-based violence

Having delved into the general views of gender-based violence, as well as focusing on its effects on women, it is also imperative that a broader perspective on the problem of gender-based violence be explored within the context of indigenous knowledge. To have a clearer perspective of the Imbusa rites, it is also important that a genuine and honest approach without any biases or preconceived notions towards traditional cultural values and belief systems is employed. This can be helpful in providing balanced opinions on the rites, particularly in the context of the teachings, to grasp an in-depth understanding of the rich values of the indigenous teachings.

Women: The custodians of the moral fibre of society

According to Sylvia Mukuka (2019, pp. 136–142), women, in most African societies, are essentially known as the custodians of the moral fabric of the society and hold esteemed positions for their role in preserving and nurturing cultural values. And so, the role of indigenous knowledge transfer is the prerogative of women, who establish social pathways to good moral values and social etiquette through their life experiences and the performance of art and initiation ceremonies. For this reason, when society's moral values are eroded by corruptible and venal activities, the blame is often repositioned on women. But, due to a high rate of gender-based violence, there seems to be a paradigm shift in how societies should perceive cultural practices. Today, there seems to be a need to engage in a serious evaluation of various cultural practices that should suit contemporary society. Since women in African societies are best known to place much emphasis on the indigenous knowledge transfer of cultural values that regulate the socialization processes, they should begin to reposition themselves in their quest for the transfer of knowledge so that whatever is taught should be relevant and contextual.

The Perception of Indigenous Teaching

In the progression of societies, some cultural beliefs bind people together, reinforcing the preservation of social values and etiquette. Indigenous knowledge transfer through initiation ceremonies is one way to bring people together. In the study of gender-based

violence, however, various opinions are expressed relating to indigenous practices. For instance, scholars such as Mushibwe (2009, pp. 144-49) and Rude (1999, pp. 7-29) attribute the high rate of gender-based violence in society to some cultural teachings in which women continue to promote certain cultural practices that are detrimental to the wellbeing of women and girls. As a result, contemporary society seems to view certain cultural practices with scepticism. Mushibwe (2009, p. 144-49) further believes that the transfer of indigenous knowledge does not promote the well-being of women, pointing to the teaching of Imbusa that it should be done away with because it does not help with the psychological well-being of young women. Others share similar views, such as Donovan (1994, pp. 11-14), who equally believes that certain cultural practices are not helpful at all and serve as destructive tools in the lives of women. Further, various critics contend that an African woman, in many indigenous cultures, is known for her status as suffering, and seems to epitomize “*Silence, Sacrifice, and Service*”. They are also referred to as “*the enclosure of another Man’s Compound*.” (1994, pp. 11-14). Although it cannot be disputed that some cultural teachings are at times oppressive to women, it does not necessarily mean that all cultural practices and indigenous teachings promote gender-based violence and that the teachings are detrimental to the well-being of women.

Siwila (2016, pp. 151-56), Richards (1969, p. 65), and Kaoma (2016, p. 179) argue, for example, that Imbusa is a rite that includes both men and women. For it to be relevant, indigenous teaching requires the participation of a man in the last ritual that validates his position in a home. This is the kind of performance that, according to Kapwepwe (1994, p. 48) and Richards (1969, p. 65), presents a man with a huge responsibility towards his wife. In fact, the teaching of Imbusa is based on various principles and vows that are taught to couples about their roles in marriage. Kapwepwe (1974, p. 48) notes that both men and women bear the same status as *Nachisungu* (female initiate) and *Shichisungu* (male initiate) during the initiation ceremony. Although the initiation for men is different, both the woman and the man are given marriage instructions together (Chipasha (2014, pp. 16-17). These arguments, in a way, dispel the consideration of Imbusa as negative indigenous teaching that promotes gendered violence. This teaching of imbusa is a kind of tool with positive values and lessons that society can draw and utilize for premarital counselling. These views are equally supported by Siwila (2015, pp. 151–56), Rasing (2001, p. 141) and Richards (1969, p. 65), who also affirm that Imbusa is known to be completed after the physical participation of men. This simply suggests that the suppositions that create the fear of this rite are allayed and that, the participation of a man in the process of initiation is cardinal in the validation of the ritual through what is called *Ukulasa Imbusa* (hitting the emblem).

In this context, therefore, the relevance of the rite affirms the qualitative teaching that suggests that not all indigenous teachings promote gender-based violence. Rather, there are aspects of indigenous knowledge and values that are passed on to future generations so that they remain very helpful both to families and to society at large. Toyin Falola (2003, p. 3), for example, contends with an affirmation that one may argue without fear of contradiction that without understanding African discourses and uses of culture, it will be difficult to understand many other issues and aspects of African affairs. Since there are both positive and negative aspects to culture, it is important to appreciate the positive aspects that promote healthy relationships between men and women in a home. An appreciation should also be bestowed on the kind of teaching that speaks against gender-based violence. Siwila (2016, pp. 152-53) and Richards (1969, p. 65) argue that Imbusa is the rite that validates the social status of a man and a woman in marriage. And, for this reason, this rite, from its inception, has been held as a pre-requisite for marriage between two people within which the total respect and value for both man and woman is affirmed.

On the other hand, the Bemba people, in the process of implementing effective teaching against gender-based violence, use various distinctive indigenous symbols and emblems, which in turn make their teaching more organized and orderly. In this teaching, the status of both man and woman is recognized and respected in the process of premarital counselling. There is an emphasis on the indispensable roles that both a man and a woman play in a marriage within the context of mutuality. This is something very significant and effective in marital preparation, which helps to avert any possibility of gender-based violence as both men and women are securely positioned (Mukuka, 2018, p. 136-142). Both Waruta and Kinoti (2000, p. 102) equally contend that the rite of Imbusa sets a firm foundation for marriages, as the African concept of marriage includes an aspect of mutuality and companionship between both man and woman, and this mutuality does not remain restricted to procreation, although it is an important aspect of its establishment. Apparently, the observation by Waruta and Kinoti, (2000, p. 102) actualizes the concept of communal participation of society in the role of teaching, as initiation is a huge social responsibility, and marriage, as a social institution, is a corporate entity that involves all members of the community and family clans. It is therefore expected that every member of the community should play a significant role in maintaining the unity and healthy relationships of every couple in the community, which should be devoid of domestic violence. It is also expected that both a man and a woman must commit themselves to each other in fulfilling their principal roles and vows in marriage by respecting each other. For instance, in the teaching of Imbusa, a man is cautioned against the temptation of developing an authoritarian attitude by building small empires in a home. He is advised against using his headship and authority as tools of oppression and domination in a home, but he is encouraged to cultivate the spirit of love and care, which is in line with Christian principles and values. A woman is also strongly cautioned against developing arrogant behaviour. She must treat her husband with dignity and respect (Mukuka, 2018, pp. 136-144). Besides, it is strongly emphasized in the teaching that a man can only earn his place of honour and authority naturally through loving and respecting his wife and family. The logical interpretation of such a teaching is that respect and honour are never earned through domination and an oppressive attitude. This is what both Jack and Judith Balswick (2000, p. 83) seem to be suggesting here: for whatever reason, there must be satisfaction with each other's marital roles and one's own role as well. This may therefore be seen in the context of a couple, who must live together in mutual understanding and harmony through reinforcing a partnership based on mutual obligation between them.

Intimate Partner Violence against Men

Therefore, viewing marriage relationships from a broader perspective, as well as within the context of mutuality, it can be argued that the teaching of the rite reinforces mutual respect for couples by discouraging the oppression of women and subservience of men in a home. In fact, according to Mukuka (2018, pp. 197–198), the first reason why Imbusa is taught to both men and women at the same time is to avoid gender-based violence in the home. When a man and a woman are taught together, they are both helped to promote a healthier and stronger relationship based on the principles of moral soundness and respect for human values. The second reason for the teaching of both men and women at the same time is that it is believed that men also suffer abuse in their marriages. Domestic oppression and violence are equally suffered by men in an intimate relationship such as a marriage, according to Mukuka (2018, pp. 197-198)², who contends that domestic oppression and violence are equally suffered by men in an intimate relationship such as a marriage. It is just that men are compelled to keep quiet about the violence out of shame. Men who are the victims of abuse often encounter pressure against reporting such abuse, a problem often

attributed to societal misconceptions about gendered relationships. As a result, the abused men feel that they will be laughing stocks of society, which will look upon them as lacking in machismo and other qualities of masculinity. As a result, intimate partner violence (IPV) against men is generally less recognized by society, and, for this reason, abused men opt to keep quiet. The other reason attributed to the problem of silence amongst men is the social and cultural predisposition. Traditionally and culturally, men are oriented and conditioned to bear more prominent and stronger traits than women. Men are taught to be stronger in the Bemba culture, which uses expressions such as, “*you do not have to weep like a woman.*” Therefore, it is also genuine to suggest that men are also prone to oppression and abuse by their wives.

Thus, to avoid the problem of gendered violence, the rite emphasizes the teaching of both men and women at the same time (Mukuka, 2019, pp. 196-198). Apparently, Carol Grothues and Shelly Marmion (2006, p. 9-14) believe that women who become violent or kill in a marriage are far more likely to be responding to violence committed against them, rather than starting it. This can probably be ascertained as an act done in self-defence by women. So, it can be stated that gender-based violence is as serious as it sounds. It is a grave issue that both men and women must seriously address, although men are generally known as the perpetrators of violence. Although the initiation ceremonies are perceived as catalysts to the domination of men in marriages, Kaoma (2016, pp. 57-58) argues that most of the songs that are presented to girls are a form of empowerment, and they are used as tools for reclaiming power and a prominent position in a home. Although some critics argue that the teaching of Imbusa emphasizes the subservience of a woman in a home, Lumbwe (2013, p. 17) disputes this notion, and argues that the teaching emphasizes the balance of power in a marriage. Although there are power differences in the wider structure of society, the rite teaches the interdependence of both man and woman in the marriage context. Observing the cultural disposition of women, Masenya, in a similar context, also contends that African women are not devoid of power, although they face many challenges. They wield a lot of power and authority in both the domestic and marriage spheres. She argues further that, “the African cultural setup includes extended families, which promotes the spirit of equality and mutual relationship between men and women in a marriage” (2004, pp. 61-62). In fact, in establishing a broader perspective of the rite, Kangwa Wilkie and Kapwepwe Mulenga (2014, p. 142) suggest that the marital relationship between husband and wife is very much valued by the Bemba people, who use proverbs to signify the profound teaching of Imbusa, which emphasizes the importance of the physical relationship between a man and woman as a symbol of the sacredness of marriage. What is more notable is that the sexual manipulation of either sex in the marital and conjugal relationship is very much discouraged and abhorred in the teaching of this rite, and that a woman is perceived as a powerful sexual symbol. Rasing (2001, pp. 140-141) contends that female power and autonomy are emphasized in the dominant roles of women in sexual activities. All these issues, it can be observed that the wind of change is blowing in Africa today in the context of African marriages. Women no longer subscribe to the dictates of patriarchy. Masenya (2004, pp. 61-62) notes that African society had low regard for women in the past, and this practice oftentimes emanated from the socialization process in the home. This socialization process resulted in the creation of a disparity between boys and girls in society. Girls were socialized into being subservient individuals, which resulted in their mentality being shaped into accommodating patriarchal ideologies.

Women and Motherhood

Besides perceiving the position of women in the context of motherhood, Sturgeon (1997, p. 29), and Vandana (1996, p. 70) note that women are very much closer to nature

through their reproductive characteristics, such as their menstrual cycles, the carrying and nurturing of life and giving birth to life. In a similar context, within the teaching of the rite, women are perceived as indispensable, profound, and respectable in the Bemba culture, within which a woman is called *Nachifyashi* (one who gives birth). Apparently, this is not an understatement; it reflects the status of women, who are highly esteemed and regarded in society. Mukuka (2018, pp. 136-142) and Rasing (2001, pp. 140-141) contend that the Bemba culture, as a way of showing respect to women, allows fathers and daughters to always keep a distance between them. When a female child is born, her private parts will always be covered in the presence of the father. A father and his daughter will always keep a distance between them throughout their life. In other words, Bemba women are highly positioned. In this teaching, a young woman in puberty is taught to cover her abdomen and the lower part of her body with a wrapper (*chitenge*) in the presence of her father as a sign of respect. This is done because women in this culture are very much associated with motherhood. In addition, traditionally and culturally, as a matter of value, a female child, regardless of her age, is addressed as *bamayo* (my mother) by her father. This is a sign of respect between father and daughter.³ More so, it is essentially taboo for a father to speak harshly to a female child, not to mention inflicting physical pain such as a beating (Mukuka, 2018, pp. 136-146). This form of socialization also extends to male children, who are under the moral obligation to accord greater respect to their sisters. As a matter of fact, the father-daughter relationship reinforces very healthy cultural values and practices that promote mutual respect for women.

In fact, parents welcome the birth of a female child, and this is because, in villages, when they grow up, their husbands are brought into the village, thus, resulting in the strengthening of their homesteads. The practice is supported by Kaoma (2015, pp. 49–69), who equally observes that Bemba women are valuable individuals who are seen as unifiers of communities and clans. Women are compared to hens in his metaphorical example. In this culture, according to Kaoma, (2015, pp. 49-69), a hen (*inkota/women*) is preferred over roosters (*Mukolwe/men*), as *bamukolwe's* (roosters) duty is limited to the sexual act only and they do not grow the family, while a hen provides its chicks security from predators and nurtures them. It is therefore important to note that not all African cultural practices are negative and oppressive, but rather there are practices that enrich and enhance women's identity and dignity (Masenya, 2004, p. 62). Similar views are expressed by Makaudze (2015), who equally argues that, in some African cultural values, women and the female body are very much respected. Even though Lobola is paid in Shona cultural practices, women are still respected and valued. Ultimately, Imbusa presents more positive cultural values in its recognition of women. Besides, to have a broader perspective on gender-based violence, and on how other indigenous practices are employed as tools against the vice, it is also equally important to consider other contexts outside Africa within which traditional cultural values and practices are preserved that are similar to the ideals of Imbusa in promoting social cohesion. Gender-based violence, for example, is prevalent in Cambodian societies, according to Nelson and Zimmerman (1996), who discovered that 15-25 percent of women are beaten by their husbands through their research. As a result, in such circumstances, the Cambodian community employs traditional and indigenous methods of addressing the problem of gender-based violence. The community has realized the cultural terrain upon which violence occurs within the context of marriages in their societies, and the values attached to marriages by the Cambodian women themselves. According to Ebihara (1974), women and wives hold very high status in Cambodian marriages. It is observed that Cambodian societies are centred on the family and household, and this family structure is reflected in the bonding between wives and husbands and between parents and children. In this way, marriages are the strongest and most enduring relations found in village social organization.

Ledgerwood (1996) observes that it is through the promotion of indigenous cultural practices that women are recognized through their roles in their family responsibilities and their position within the template as wives and mothers. Thus, marriage and parenthood are important signifiers of status within Cambodian society. Ledgerwood (1996) further suggests that the role of motherhood is special for women, which, in a way, helps to enhance the success of their husbands. In this way, Cambodian and South-East Asian women gain an important public value and prestige as mothers and elders in the family, worthy of respect. Wazir (1995) observes that women have been granted a little bit of exploration of economic ventures, which in turn assists them to acquire financial independence. Wazir (1995) also suggests that the recognition of motherhood in the indigenous and cultural context within Cambodian society grants women a social privilege in the sense that it diffuses boundaries between the public and domestic spheres, thereby, giving women the legitimacy to explore other forms of personal or social activity outside the family. Therefore, it can be ascertained that the Cambodian cultural practice of recognizing the status of women establishes a firm and significant cornerstone upon which the community can build in enhancing the position of women. Thus, looking at both the Cambodian experience and the Imbusa of the Bemba people, it can ultimately be suggested that these two practices provide very significant aspects of traditional life within an indigenous cultural setup. These are inevitably and essentially important forms of cultural practices that make sense in the context of gender-based violence, as they stabilize the social function of the community. This is because rites such as marriage are essential elements of the social integration of women into society. The social and cultural values that are incorporated into the social fibre of the community are used as a measure by the public for the validation of women's positions both in the home and society, which in turn enhances the collective behaviour of the society towards women.

Conclusion

Having explored some of the issues of gender-based violence, it can now be concluded that the practice of Imbusa tries as much as possible to deal with issues of gender-based violence in its quest to create healthy and worthwhile relationships between couples, especially in addressing issues of abuse and oppression in a marriage. It engages in balanced teaching to couples to a reasonable extent. Like various international human rights organizations which have engaged in the advocacy of the preservation and recognition of the rights of women, the teaching of Imbusa also emphasizes mutual respect between men and women in a relationship. It can be argued that its teaching is conducted in a more organized and orderly manner, where both men and women are recognized in the process of premarital counselling. The teaching's special focus on the roles that both man and woman play in a marriage is explicated as indispensable in the context of mutuality. Thus, understanding Imbusa from the perspective of initiation has profound importance as being a tool for premarital counselling and character alignment of couples towards attaining an equitable and sustainable life. It is also used as a tool that uses indigenous knowledge to fight gender-based violence in society.

Notes

[1] Imbusa is an indigenous method of traditional teaching for the Bemba people of Northern Zambia. In this kind of teaching, both men and women are taught together on issues pertaining to marriage.

[2] This information is based on personal interviews conducted with men who have been abused by their spouses. This was during my PhD research in 2018 on Imbusa, in the northern part of Zambia.

[3] This information was gathered during my PhD research study in the Northern part of Zambia.

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