

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE INITIATIVE ORGANISATIONS TO THE NEEDS OF ABUSED WOMEN IN NIGERIA

Yemisi Lydia OLALEYE (Ph.D)

Department of Social Work,
University of Ibadan,
Oyo State, Nigeria
E-mail:yemisi1957@yahoo.co.u
yl.olaleye@mail.ui.edu.ng

Abstract

Violence against women is the most pervasive yet least recognised human rights abuse in Nigeria. It is time to end this outrage and create a society where our mothers, sisters, aunts, niece, daughters and partners are valued, safe and empowered. This paper investigated the contributions of community service initiative to the needs of abused women. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study while purposive random sampling technique was used to select 110 abused women from the community service initiative organisations. Chi-Square statistical analysis was used to analyse the data collected for the study. The study revealed that there was significant relationship between the level of contribution of community service initiative organizations and the level of meeting the needs of abused women (X^2 -Crit=9.48, X^2 -Cal = 16.09, $df = 4$, $P < .05$). The study established that there is no significant relationship between the challenges that abused women faced and the commitment of community service initiative organisations (X^2 -Crit=16.91, X^2 -Cal = 7.01, $df = 9$, $P < .05$). The finding showed that there is significant relationship between the perceived results of the contributions of Community Service Initiative Organisations (CSIOs) and women survivors from abuse (X^2 -Crit=15.92 X^2 -Cal = 18.15, $df = 6$, $P < .05$). The study, therefore, recommended that community service agencies should offer different programmes and services for women who are or were subjected to abuse in their intimate relationships. Stakeholders and Non-Governmental Organizations should create awareness for violence against women by educating the public in order to prevent and reduce violence against women.

Key Words: *violence, community service initiative, organisations, abused women, needs*

Introduction

In recent times, increased awareness of the people on multifarious needs of abused women in Nigeria, has led to a meteoric rise in the involvement of community groups, civil society organisations, private and public spirited individuals and recognised formal or informal local occupational groups.

Increased crime rate manifesting as rape, violence, kidnapping, ritual killings, insurgency (Boko Haram), terrorism, child molestation, matrimonial (domestic) violence and the like had affected the female gender more than the other gender in frightening proportion in all nooks and crannies of Nigeria. In Nigeria, many

women are brutally treated by their intimate partners and this has, in some cases, led to the death of such women. The level of violence against women in Nigeria is increasing daily with two out of every three women experiencing violence in the family (Fareo, 2015).

There is need for immediate action of individuals in society to eradicate violence against girls and women by supporting and empowering women. It is time to end this outrage and create a society where mothers, sisters, aunts, niece, daughters and partners are valued, safe and empowered. Violence against women is the most pervasive yet least recognised human rights abuse in Nigeria. Women and girls are victimised in Nigeria in ways that threaten their physical, emotional, psychological and sexual well-being. The society has a responsibility of pursuing a socio-cultural framework that is rooted in equality and justice for women, which is supported by a legal system that holds perpetrators accountable for their actions (Clarence-Smith and William, 2009).

All women have the right to live in safety and with dignity, free from intimidation and threat of violence. In 2004, a group of communities launched a “Domestic Violence Action Plan for Abused Women”. It is a comprehensive approach to prevent domestic violence and improve supports for abused women and their children whenever it happens. Domestic Violence Action Plan for Abused Women works in partnership with violence against women organisations and other professionals in community, health, education and justice sectors to promote better support for the victims. These efforts include enhanced counselling services, transitional and housing supports; support training for front-line workers and professionals across sectors; promote public education and

prevention to change attitudes and mobilize communities to stop violence before it happens and improve Nigeria’s criminal and family justice systems to better protect women and their children and hold abusers accountable for their behaviour (Colorado Domestic Violence Offender Management Board, 2010).

Since 2009, the above work has been informed by the Community Domestic Violence Advisory Council (CDVAC). It contains initiatives in five priority areas: access and equity, education and training and legal systems’ response to abused women, child welfare, threat assessment and risk management. This council has helped in engaging survivors in the development of programmes and policies that respond to violence against women and supporting survivor-led initiatives. Domestic Violence Coalition recruited survivors to participate in various levels of the local coordinating committee. Survivors were provided training and support for costs, such as child care and travel, which can be a barrier to their participation (*AfroNews*, 2007).

Changing attitudes about gender inequality can help break patterns of violent behaviour and victimisation. The Domestic Violence Advisory Council used public education plays in shifting attitudes to recognising our collective responsibility for preventing violence against women and supporting abused women and their children (Ibrahim and Saliu, 2004). Community organization-based legal services also help abused women access information about court processes and services to help them navigate the family and criminal justice system.

Women abuse is any cause of psychological, physical or sexual force, actual or threatened in an intimate relationship. Intimate relationships include a current or former

spouse and an intimate or dating partner. Violence is used to intimidate, humiliate or frighten victims or to make them feel powerless. According to United Nations General Assembly (1993), women's abuse is any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring or in private (US AID in Africa, 2015).

Women abuse affects all communities in Nigeria (Booth, 2003). The violence against women system is intended to provide a comprehensive response to all women experiencing abuse. As the DVAC noted, the ethnic, linguistic, cultural and geographic diversity of Nigeria require focused and sometimes unique responses. The Coalition of Rape Crisis Centre provided training to staff working in Ministries that fund violence against women's programmes on an intersectional approach to understanding diversity, equity and access. The workshop provided an opportunity for participants to understand the systematic and structural barriers affecting diverse communities of sexual abuse survivors in accessing programmes and services. Women abuse can cause the loss of safety, dignity and control experienced by women. Women can either be the direct victims of abuse (physical, psychological, verbal, financial, sexual assault/violence and /or spiritual abuse) or subjected to threats of abuse to themselves and/or their children, step-children or other loved ones (Azziz-Baumgartner, McKeown, Melvin, Dang, and Reed, 2011).

The common loss of women's rights upon marriage in sub-Saharan Africa and the implicit obedience and defense towards men are socially encouraged within the society.

According to UNICEF (2001), traditionally in Nigeria, as in many other African countries, the beating of wives and children is widely sanctioned as a form of discipline. Therefore, in beating their children, parents believe they are instilling discipline in them, much the same way as in husbands beating their wives, who are regarded like children and are prone to indiscipline which must be curbed. Cases of domestic violence against women have been on the increase in Nigeria (Agbo, and Choji, 2014). There have been reports of cases of husbands killing and maiming their wives in the media. Community service is provided by an institution of higher education through formal or informal consultation with local non-profit government and community-based organisations, as designed to improve the quality of life for community residents, particularly low-income individuals, or to solve particular problems related to their needs. Community service is not – for-pay activities that are performed by someone or a group of people for the benefit of the public or its institution.

Performing community service is not the same as volunteering, since it is not always performed on voluntary basis. It may be performed for variety of reasons such as it may be required by the government or as part of citizenship service to humanity. Generally, in lieu of military service, it may be required as a substitution for or in addition to, other criminal justice sanctions and it may be mandated by schools to meet requirement of the class, such as in cases of service-learning or for graduation. Community service initiatives serve as a means for co-curricular community service, contributing programmes that centre on service, relationship building, awareness to educate and socially develop members of the community (Lacey, McPherson, Samuel,

Sear, and Head, 2003). Most women in Nigeria are not aware of the fact that an act of violence against them is a form of human rights violation. Some who are aware are afraid of stigma and consequently, they tolerate violence and suffer in silence. Most cultural and traditional belief systems of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria assign inferior role to women and further promote violence against women (Nwiro, 2012). As there are no laws on some very prominent forms of violence against women in Nigeria, most acts of violence against women are justified on the grounds of some women's actions or inactions. Some women, especially, in the Northern part of the country, are of the opinion that the husband can punish the wife if she neglects some of her duties such as taking good care of the children or not putting the husband's food on the table in good time (Ilika, Okonkwo, and Adogu, 2002).

People who do not know the rights to which they are entitled, cannot demand them. Women, in particular, often lack both awareness and understanding of their rights. Consequently, violence within the family is often not perceived as an offence, but as the right of the father or husband, irrespective of formal legislation. Additionally, information about relevant laws is scarce and often not available in the local dialect. Legal procedures are often complicated, tedious and expensive (Karanja, 2009). Structural causes of violence can be prevented from schools. There is need to challenge common gender stereotypes and promote a more balanced relationship between the two sexes. Boys need to learn that being a 'real man' does not necessarily imply dominant or violent behaviour against females as to develop their self-confidence and sense of autonomy (Colorado Domestic Violence Offender Management Board 2010).

It is important to note that there are laws in Nigeria Constitution meant for the protection of women and prosecution of violence acts against women. Such laws include Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement Act of 2003, and the Sexual offences bill, 2015. However, just as it is in every society, there are deviants and people who do not live by the laws; as such there will always be reported and unreported cases of women abuse. According to a survey by the National Demographic and Health Survey 2008, 28% of all women, which is almost a third of women in Nigeria, are believed to have been subjected to physical, sexual and psychological violence carried out primarily by their husbands, partners and fathers. The laws focus mainly on the punishment of the offenders; little or no attention is paid to the needs of the victims (abused women), such as provision of some form of rehabilitation (Booth, 2003).

The needs of the abused woman are many and so, a woman who has suffered abuse may need some or all of the following services and in no particular order. These are housing, education, employment or empowerment, legal assistance, health care, financial assistance, material goods, counselling and encouragement and so on (UNICEF, 2001). The community service initiatives must raise awareness about the availability of help for victims and encourage more women to come and open up about their experiences so that appropriate help can be rendered. However, many victims of abuse will only be willing to come forth if there is no threat of stigmatization. Therefore, community service initiative have a duty of sensitizing the society about the disadvantages of stigmatization and why it is important to make victims feel accepted, loved and safe.

Community service initiative can also provide a place as accommodation, conduct basic medical checks on the abused, rehabilitate the abused women and spiritual guidance (UNICEF, 2005). Many women survivors prefer female health providers, especially, for reproductive health care. It is very imperative for the Nigerian government to mobilize and build the capacity of health care providers in the community in acquiring in-depth information about providing care for abused women. Financial empowerment approach focuses on mobilizing the self-help effort of women that are abused because of poverty. Women have the potential to change their economic status as well as that of the community (Ibrahim, and Salihu, 2004, Mears, 2003, Nwiro, 2012).

The most widespread factor of abuse on women in Nigeria is the fact that Nigeria operates patriarchal society, whereby, it is socially acceptable to abuse a woman. The matters get worse upon marriage, where women lose their rights, when they get to their husbands' houses, as they are forced be obedient and subjugated. Although, abuse against women is still a prevalent issue in Nigeria, more women have come forward to report cases of abuse towards them (Fareo, 2015). Also, Nigerian judicial system has taken a stronger look on causes of violence or any abuse against women in the country. Considering the devastating effects of abuse against women to the family and the larger society, the issue deserves serious attention from the society. Based on the foregoing, this study, therefore, examined the contributions of community service initiative organisations on needs of abused women.

The main objective of the study was to examine the challenges confronting the abused women and to assess the contributions of the community service

initiative organisations to the needs of abused women.

Hypotheses

Ho₁ There is no significant relationship between the level of contributions of community service organisations and level of meeting the needs of abused women.

Ho₂: There is no relationship between perceived result of the contributions community service initiative organisations and overcome from abused by women.

Ho₃ There is no significant relationship between the challenges of abused women faced and community service initiative organizations' commitment.

Methodology

The research design adopted for the study was descriptive research design. This design was selected for the study because the researcher attempted to determine whether there are relationships between the variables; that is, abused women needs and community service initiative.

The target population for the study are both male and female in Community service initiative organisations and survivors of abused women in Lagos State.

Purposive random sampling technique was used to select respondents from the community service initiative organisations. The sample for the study comprised five community service initiative organisations in Lagos State, namely; Women's Aid Collective (WACOL), Women Centre for Peace and Development (WOPED), Women's Organization for Gender Issue (WOGI), Women's Initiative for Self-Actualization (WISA) and Family Heritage Initiative (FHI). Twenty two respondents were selected from each of the community service initiative organisations which made the total respondents used for the study to become one hundred and ten.

The study used self-structured questionnaire designed by the researcher tagged “Contributions of Community Service Initiative Organisations to the Needs of Abused Women Questionnaire” (CCSONAWQ). It contained statements, which were used in eliciting responses from both male and female in the community service initiative organisations and survivors of abused women. A 4-point Likert scale was used to categorize the responses of the

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Agree
Strongly Agree

The questionnaires have a section named: Section A which measured the contributions of community service initiatives to abused women needs.

Validity and Reliability of the Study

Validity of the instrument described the adopted procedure in ensuring that the instrument used measured what it was designed for. The researcher ensured that both face content and context validity of the instrument prepared. The study also adopted the community service initiative organisations history and fact file in validating the instruments. The fact file was

respondents. The respondents were to choose from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” depending on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements in the questionnaire. The 4-point Likert scale was used to give a range of responses from which the respondents were to choose in order to assign numerical values or scores to the responses. The 4-point likert scale was used in the form below:

1
2
3
4

necessary for every community service initiative organisations operating in Nigeria to have and recognized nationwide.

Data Analysis

Data collected were analysed by using chi-square analysis to establish the relationship between contributions of community service initiatives and abused women needs at 0.05 level of significance.

Test of Hypotheses

H₁ There is no significant relationship between the level of contributions of community service organisations and level of meeting the needs of abused women

Table 1: Showing Cross Tabulation and Chi-Square Relationship between the Level of contributions of Community Service Initiative Organisations and Level of Meeting the Needs of abused women

Level of contributions of community service initiative organizations	Level of abused women needs			Total	X ² Cal	X ² Crit	df	P
	Great needs	Moderate needs	Low needs					
Total	13(38.3)	12(32.5)	5(12.8)	30(27.3)				
Partial	13(38.3)	8(21.6)	7(17.9)	28(25.5)	16.09	9.48	4	0.05
Nil	8(23.5)	17(45.9)	27(69.3)	52(47.2)				
Total	34(30.9)	34(33.6)	39(35.5)	110				

X² = 16.09, df=4, P<0.05

Table 1 shows the cross-tabulation and chi-square analysis between the level of contribution of community service initiative organisations and the level of meeting the needs of abused women (X^2 -Crit=9.48, X^2 -Cal = 16.09 df= 4, $P < .05$). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicated that the community service initiative organisations have relationship with the needs of abused

women. The implication of this is that a high level of contribution of CSIOs will enhance more to the needs of women.

H₂: There is no relationship between perceived result of the contributions community service initiative organisations and overcome from abused by women

Table 2: Showing Cross Tabulation and Chi-Square Relationship between Perceived Result of the Contributions of Community Service Initiative Organizations and Survivor Women from Abuse

Perceived result of the contributions of community service initiative organizations	Survivor women from abuse			Total	X^2 Cal	X^2 Crit	df	P
	Successful	Not successful	Abandoned					
Very successful	7(20.0)	9(20.0)	4(13.4)	20(18.2)				
Successful	6(17.2)	10(22.3)	3(10.0)	19(17.3)	18.15	15.92	6	0.05
Not successful	10(28.5)	13(28.8)	1(3.4)	24(21.8)				
A failure	12(34.3)	13(28.8)	22(73.4)	47(42.7)				
Total	35(31.8)	45(40.9)	30(27.3)	110				

$X^2 = 18.15$, df=6, $P < 0.05$

Table 2 reveals the cross-tabulation and Chi-square analysis of perceived result of the contribution of CSIOs and survived from abuse by women (X^2 -Crit=15.92 X^2 -Cal = 18.15, df = 6, $P < .05$). Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected, meaning that there is significant relationship between the perceived results of the contributions of

CSIOs and women survivors from abuse. This implies that a positive result of the contributions of CSIOs will make the abused women overcome their abuse.

H₃ There is no significant relationship between the challenges abused women faced and community service initiative organisations' commitment

Table 3: Showing Cross Tabulation and Chi-Square Relationship between Challenges Faced by abused women and Level of Commitment of Community Service Initiative Organisations

	Level of commitment of CSIOs				Total	X ² Cal	X ² Crit	df	P
	High	Moderate	Low	Nil					
Challenges of abused women faced									
Low trust level	4(16.6)	5(19.2)	7(20.5)	5(19.3)	21(19.5)				
Differential	6(25.0)	5(19.2)	8(23.5)	8(30.7)	27(24.5)	7.01	16.91	9	0.05
Capital inequality	5(20.8)	8(30.7)	7(20.5)	10(38.5)	30(27.3)				
Market related	9(37.5)	8(30.7)	12(35.3)	3(11.5)	32(29.1)				
Total	24(21.8)	26(23.6)	34(30.9)	26(23.6)	110				

X² = 7.01, df=9, P<0.05

The above table shows the cross-tabulation and Chi-square analysis of relationship between challenges faced by the abused women and level of commitment of CSIOs (X²-Crit=16.91, X²-Cal = 7.01, df = 9, P < .05). Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. This shows that there is no significant relationship between the challenges that abused women faced and commitment of CSIOs. This implies that if abused women really want to survive or overcome their abuse, they need to come out and let the CSIOs be aware of their needs.

Discussion of Findings

It was observed in this study that the community service initiative organisations have relationship with the needs of abused women. The finding was supported by UNICEF (2001) which opined that the needs of an abused woman are many and a woman who has suffered abuse may need some or all of the following services and in no particular order: housing, education,

employment or empowerment, legal assistance, healthcare, financial assistance, material goods, counselling, encouragement and so on. The community service initiatives must raise awareness about the availability of helping the victims and also encourage more women to come and open up about their experiences so that appropriate help can be rendered.

It was also established by this result that there is significant relationship between the perceived results of the contributions of CSIOs and women survivors from abuse. The findings corroborate the study of UNICEF (2005) which stated that many victims of abuse will only be willing to come forth if there is no threat of stigmatisation. Therefore, community service initiative organisations have a duty of sensitizing the society about the disadvantages of stigmatisation and the reasons why it is important to make victims feel accepted, loved and safe. Community service initiatives can also provide a place for

accommodation, conduct basic medical checks and rehabilitate the abused women.

It is revealed in this study that there is no significant relationship between the challenges that abused women faced and commitment of CSIOs. This result was in line with the findings of Booth (2003) which asserted that the laws in place focus mainly on the offenders and punishment of the offenders; little or no attention is paid to the needs of the victims (abused women) and provision of some forms of rehabilitation. Karanja (2009) also buttressed that the study of violence within the family is often not perceived as an offence, but as the right of the father or husband, irrespective of formal legislation. Additionally, information about relevant laws is scarce and often not available in the local dialect. Legal procedures are often complicated, tedious and expensive.

Conclusion

In conclusion, women abuse is prevalent in developing countries such as Nigeria, requiring institution of effective strategies for its prevention. Changing the community beliefs and cultural attitudes and norms that give rise to men's abusive behaviour toward women is an imperative challenge. Public enlightenment programmes using both the electronic and print media may be one way to do so. Programmes designed to change these draw people into discussion and encourage them to consider cultural norms that curb violence. Agencies that work on gender-based violence should make special effort to reach out to the male folks. In addition, education programmes should also be conducted for other important target groups such as the law enforcement agents. Perpetrators of abused should be severely punished to act as deterrent to others. Victim-friendly organisations that

will help take up the social, economic and rehabilitation process of victims and female empowerment through education and employment are strongly needed.

Recommendations

After all the above findings, the study established that abused women should be concerned with efforts to heal their wounds and move on with their new life.

1. Community service initiative organisations should increase level of their activities to reduce level of needs of the abused women.
2. Nigerian government needs to intensify efforts to establish standard and well equipped counselling centres with professionally trained counsellors in the communities, this will help the abuse women to assess their option, plan for their safety, resolve conflict and overcome trauma.
3. Community service initiative organisations should put more efforts in their awareness programmes about the available helps they render to the victims of the abused.
4. These organisations should also encourage more abused women to come out from their shelves, open up and relay their experiences so that appropriate help can be given to them.
5. Community service agencies should offer different programmes and services for women who are or were subjected to abuse in their intimate relationships.
6. Stakeholders and Non-Governmental Organisations should create awareness for violence against women by educating the public from educational institutions to markets

and places of work in order to prevent and reduce violence against women.

7. Local communities and community groups should be encouraged to participate actively in the monitoring process and supporting pressure groups on advocating the passing of law against abuse and violence.
8. Awareness walks against women abuses should be encouraged in order to raise awareness on the rising spats or domestic abuse where necessary.
9. A variety of social services should be available in Nigeria to address the issue of women abuse and if these services are well utilized, they can bring the occurrence to minimal level.
10. The public should be aware that contributions of community service initiatives make the abused women overcome their pain/trauma.
11. There is need for the public, especially abused women/victims from rural areas to be mobilized so that their needs can be met by community service initiative organisations to overcome their pain, bitter experience, emotional shock or physical injury.

References

- AfroNews (2007). Half of Nigeria's women experience domestic violence. Retrieved from: <http://www.afro.com/awrticles/16471> on the 14/10/ 2015
- Azziz-Baumgartner, E. McKeown, L., Melvin, P., Dang, Q., & Reed, J. (2011). Rates of Femicide in women of different races, ethnicities, and places of birth: Massachusetts, 1993-2007. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 26(5), 1077-1097
- Agbo, C. and Choji, R. (2014). Domestic violence against women: Any end in sight? Retrieved from: <http://www.leadership/news/382501> on the 24/12/ 2015
- Booth, C. (2003). 'Women's rights are human rights.' Paper presented at Access to justice, organized by the British Council, Abuja.
- Clarence-Smith and William, G. (2009). "Islam and Female Genital Cutting in Southeast Asia: The weight of the past". *Finish Journal of Ethnicity and Migration*. 3 (2), 4.
- Colorado Domestic Violence Offender Management Board (2010). Standards for treatment with court ordered domestic violence offender. Retrieved from <http://dcj.state.co.us/odvsom/Domestic> Violence/DV pdfs on the 10/10/2015.
- Fareo, D.O. (2015). Domestic Violence against Women in Nigeria. *European Journal of Psychological Research*. 12(1), 48-54.
- Ibrahim, J and Salihu, A. (2004). Women, Marginalization and Politics in Nigeria. Abuja: OSIWA, Global Rights and CDD.
- Ilika, A.L. Okonkwo, P.I., and Adogu, P. (2002). Intimate partner violence among women of childbearing age in a primary health care centre in Nigeria. *African Journal of Reproductive Health*. 16(2), 53-58.
- Karanja, J. (2009). *The missionary movement in colonial Kenya: The foundation of Africa Inland church*. Gottinger Cuvillier Verlag

- Lacey, K.K., McPherson, M.D., Samuel, P.S., Sear, K.P., and Head, D. (2003). The Impact of Different Types of intimate partner violence on the mental and physical health of women in different ethnic groups. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 28(2), 359-385.
- Mears, D.P. (2003). Research and interventions to reduce domestic violence revictimization. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*. 44(2), 127-147.
- Nwiro, E. (2012). Gender in Nigeria: Calls for Girls, Women Empowerment. This Day Newspaper, May 10, pp. 33.
- UNICEF (2001). Children and women rights in Nigeria: A wake up call assessment and analysis. Edited by Hodge. Abuja: National Population Commission and UNICEF. Retrieved from: <http://www.unicef.org/roy/nig/> on the 24 October, 2015.
- UNICEF (2005). Violence at home (archive) Voices of Youth Forum. Retrieved from: <http://www.unicef.org/roy/discussion/archived/index> on the 26/09/2015
- US AID in Africa. "Non-Governmental Organizations Supported by US AID Partners in Nigeria. Retrieved from:" <http://www.info.usaid.gov/regions/afr/ngo.htm> (Accessed 14 October, 2015)