

Social consequences of wife-battering in Ogbaru and Onitsha North Local Government Areas of Anambra State, Nigeria

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Domestic violence is gaining increasing notoriety in Nigeria, yet, it is treated with little importance. This could be attributed to a number of reasons; one of which is underreporting. This article examines the social consequences of wife-battering in Ogbaru and Onitsha North LGAs of Anambra State, Nigeria. Using qualitative and quantitative research approaches, a sample of 364 respondents comprising of 196 males and 168 females was drawn from Anambra State. The study adopted multi-stage and purposive sampling techniques in reaching the respondents. The quantitative data were analyzed using percentages, while thematic method of analysis was employed in the qualitative data. We found out and argue in this paper that wife-battering causes divorce, miscarriage, and children growing up to be aggressive. This paper proposes the need for emotionally incompatible couples to be allowed to get divorce. Also, the study calls for the government to encourage battered wives and children to get emotionally stabilized by establishing marriage counseling units in the communities that make up the Local Government Areas. And the units should make use of the services of personality psychologists and social workers.

Keywords: Divorce, Miscarriage, Nagging, Social-consequences, Wife-battering.

Most traditional African societies are patriarchal in structure, and women's place is decidedly subordinated (Olanuji, 2017; Agbogu & Ibekwe, 2015; Bowman, 2003). The institutionalization of this inequality is pervasive in the African indigenous law where the rights of women to inherit their husbands' properties are not recognized. Onwe, Odio and Eze (2019); Bowman (2003) argued that economic abuse is strongly supported by the power of the extended

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family over married couple's and the universal institution of bride price. Socially, bride price is often interpreted as man's power over what he has bought. Hence, it confers on the man exclusive sexual right over his wife. A woman is disadvantaged in this regard. This is a source of wife-battering which Igbo culture tolerates. In other words, this double standard of culture traditionally justified men to have extra marital affairs which women are not allowed to have (Gurmu & Endale, 2017; Hassan, Seedhom & Mahfouz, 2016; Abrahams, Jewkes & Laubsher, 1999; Ezuma, 2003).

Patriarchy is usually recreated, validated and sustained by male-child preference. In Igbo society, quest for a son and the inability to have one makes a man in this regard to feel relatively deprived. Some can be aggressive and even blame their wives for the shortcomings. In such case, battering can ensue at the slightest provocation. A case at sight is that of the researchers' friend in the neighbourhood whose husband usually beats and calls a witch, and accuses her of wanting to close his lineage, because she has not given birth to a male child. More so, an urban area like Onitsha North, as a center of intermingling of cultures, exposes couples to conflicting social roles, especially in the norms of traditional spousal engagements and expectations in food habits, dress codes, spatial behaviours, relationship with the out-group etc. When these are violated or not in conformity with the expected standard, they become sources of wife-battering.

Furthermore, in this era of globalization, the emergence of social media as one of the components of social relations of production has dwarfed the social distances between families and their significant others. Text messages, E-mails, Facebook, Tweeter, WhatsApp etc have been associated with conflict among couples. Jung (2013) in agreement with Krafsky and Jason (2013) opined that social networking sites such as Whatsapp and Zoom allow people to find and connect with each other. However, such easy connection can also have its downsides such as lack of privacy. Some husbands frown at their wives communicating with males through social media. Thus, it creates environment for suspicion, jealousy and gossip which could lead to wife-battering.

Economically, the search for greener pasture has led to labour migration, different residential space for couples and even emergence of third parties that threaten family cohesiveness, thus leading to battering. Owo (1994) in Ebisi (2016) observed that the migration of people from villages to urban areas produces a radical change in the family structure. Families now go to work and no longer exist as a single working unit which is based on collective consciousness, but everyone works differently. This is a shift from the traditional (mechanical) society to the organic (complex) industrial and digitalized one. The base for global integration is at the moment, functionally interdependent on division of labour and emergence of social media (like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter etc). These can be seen as contributing factors to wife-battering.

To Bowman (2003), many of the quarrels in homes are occasioned by social change and inability of couples to adjust to its demands. For instance, quarrels erupt because of the inability of some men in the modern economy to support their families; women growing independence as they engage in other roles that often interfere with their domestic chores. He further posited that migration and urbanization have brought many families and individuals in Africa into alienated lifestyles, unlike what was obtainable in the traditional settings. In addition, with increasing urbanization, couples live far from their families of origin, who traditionally mediate in domestic violence disputes, that is, the influences of the family and the elders over its members are weakening as some of its members enter the cash economy and are thus not as dependent economically as they were in traditional society. Consequently, this leads to violence in the home as the relatives are not

close to summon and mediate between couples when issues arise, but rather the learned few among them may utilize the social media to intercede. Consequently, this medium of intervention cannot be equated to physical mediation, where emotions could be expressed.

Economic dependence has an alienating effect on its victims. An economically empowered woman can be battered by her husband for asserting some rights. Considering the high rate of unemployment and displacement of workers in most sectors, a man's loss of means of livelihood and the tendency of depending on his wife can be emotionally disturbing. It can also lead to displaced aggression in form of wife-battering. Adegoke and Esere (2013) Fakunmoju, Bammeke, Oyekanmi, Temilola and George (2016) argued that unemployment could provide the "trigger point" for violent situations in the home. They noted that "with the problems in the country and unemployment being as high as it is and the associated financial problems, the pressures within family life are far greater. When families go through difficulties, when a man loses his job or has financial problems, it can escalate and lead to alcohol or drug abuse. Quite often, violence can follow from that and become an added stress that can push spouses to the breaking point" (Fakunmoju, Bammeke, Oyekanmi, Temilola & George, 2016:24; Adegoke & Esere, 2013:6).

Infidelity is often associated with Greek gifts, monetary exchange etc. A spouse, especially the wife that usually gets gifts, money or even free ride from male friends (acquaintances) is more likely to be battered by her husband. Such is likely to create suspicion, lack of trust and wife battering. Ikenna (2006) Emegwa, Lawoko and Jansson (2016) reported that a mother of two was beaten in Onitsha and asked to go back to her parents' house just because of her colleague (a man) that stays in the neighbourhood who usually assists by giving her a ride back home. She ignored her husband's warning about her relationship with the colleague.

Unarguably, wife-battering is prevalent in Nigeria; and in various homes, women are battered regularly by their husbands but hardly do they report the abuses because in some cases they are further humiliated by their families, security agents and society at large because they argue that it is a marital affair. It is in view of the above observations that this study seeks to examine the social-consequences of wife battering in Ogbaru and Onitsha North Local Government Areas of Anambra State, Nigeria.

Theoretical prediction: the feminist model

Notable proponents of feminist model are Simone De Beauvoir (1970), Betty Friedan (1963), Althusser (1971), Brownmiller (1976), Smart and Smart (1978). Worthy of note here also are Elizabeth Stanton and Susan Anthony whose struggles led to the formation of National Women Suffrage Association (NWSA) in the 20's that marked the emergence of modern feminism (Charles, 2010). Feminist model states that the men-women relationship has always been unequal and oppressive. And in all patriarchal societies, men have always dominated women. Feminism is an intellectual movement which predicates its thrust on the belief that women should not be discriminated against but should have equal rights and opportunities with their men counterparts all over the world (Charles, 2010). According to Ritzer and Stepnisky (2014), the presence of women is today seen and felt in most social situations. Brownmiller (1976); Smart and Smart (1975) believed that until the advent of the feminist movement, the abuse of women was seen to be largely rooted in biological sex differences. De Beauvoir (1970); Oakley (1981) and Richardson (1981) argued that these biologically determined sex differences were held to take expression in a masculinity characterized by dominance, aggression and sexual appetite, and a feminist characterized by passivity, dependence, and contradictory qualities of seductiveness and modesty.

Mina (1986); Gould (1988) and Vogelmann (1990) argued that this biologically rooted explanation of domestic violence by men against women went long unabated until the 1960's when the feminist movement came to challenge the determinist biological perspective by exposing the degree to which it is socially constructed and serves to maintain patriarchal social order. However, much of this ideology still holds today in terms of popular belief (Oli, 2012). Walker (1996) and Ezeah (2013) argued that society holds the false belief that women are by nature less intellectual and physically less capable than men, thus it tends to discriminate against women. In the language of Daly (1978) and Dworkin (1981), the basic division in all societies is between men and women. The duo further argued that men are the oppressors of women in patriarchal societies. This form of oppression involves class, imperialist oppression and colour. They also see women's role in reproduction as both motivating and enabling men dominate them and the wish of men to control women's sexual availability and to exploit the female folk through unpaid domestic works at home.

Thus, Smart and Smart (1978); Barret (1980) and Rorbaugh (1981) argued that domestic violence is an inevitable consequence of the power differentials inherent in a patriarchal society and serves as a means of social control over the women. Furthermore, Althusser (1971) maintained that domestic violence has its roots in a socially and politically structured gender system, which has been institutionalized and is lived out by men and women as if it was a "natural" aspect of their identity. However, feminist theorists argued that domestic violence can be eradicated through a structural change in gender relations at all levels (Nnonyelum, 2014; Charles, 2010; Scott & Schwartz, 2006; Chinweizu, 1990).

In this context, feminist theory has created a new branch of critical social theory. It has forged the much-desired interdisciplinary cooperation and integration of knowledge by combining the macro and micro perspectives of social order to understanding of women underdevelopment (Charles, 2010). More attention is now given to the role of history and culture in finding solution to socially inflicted gender issues. Sex or gender stereotyping has been brought to the fore and condemned to the extent that more attention is given to women and their integration into politics, economy and religion.

Method

Study design and location

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. This design was used because it can accurately gather necessary information within a limited timeframe on large sample. The design is economical and focuses on studying large and small populations with emphasis on relative incidence, distribution and interrelations of sociological and psychological variables (Isangedighi, Joshua, Asim, & Ekuri, 2014). The study was conducted in Onitsha North and Ogbaru LGAs of Anambra State, Nigeria.

Participants and procedures

The target population for this study was 349,235 which comprised of 182,714 males and 166,521 females. Of this population, 125,918 are from Onitsha North Local Government while 223,317 are from Ogbaru Local Government (National Population Commission, 2006). Using Alien Taro Yamane (1967) method of sample size determination, with a 95% confidence level and level of maximum variability ($P = 0.05$), a sample of 400 was computed—out of which—364 respondents were used after data collation, gleaning, cleansing and analysis.

The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted in the selection of respondents from the communities, villages, streets and households. Multi-stage method is relevant to this study because the population is made up of several clusters. The researchers clustered Anambra State into her 21 LGAs which were further grouped into urban and rural LGAs. From this categorization, two LGAs were selected. In this light, Onitsha North LGA was purposively selected from the urban LGA, while Ogbaru LGA was purposively selected from the rural LGA.

Data Collection and Procedures

In this study, we adopted quantitative and qualitative approaches in data collection. The instruments for data collection were structured questionnaire and unstructured In-Depth Interview. The instruments were administered by four researchers. The researchers were postgraduate students in Sociology Department, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka who have fair knowledge and skills required for Social Science researches. The researchers were trained on the objectives of the research, particularly issues concerning wife-battering. Participation in the research was risk-free, anonymous, voluntary, confidential and based on informed consent of all participants. Out of 400 questionnaires distributed, 364 were returned; 19 of them were not properly completed and thus were rejected while 17 were not returned. Thus, we had a total of 364 copies for analysis. In order to complement data generated through questionnaire instrument, in-depth interviews were conducted on 10 participants - 5 male and 5 female participants respectively. Each respondent's interview lasted between 33 and 80 minutes. The interview was recorded with tape-recorder and handwritten notes.

Data Analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative components of the data collected were subjected to scrutiny before cleansing, coding and analysis. The quantitative data analysis was performed using International Business Machine (IBM) Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). The results of IBM SPSS were further analyzed, interpreted and organized using tables, frequencies and charts. The qualitative data were analyzed using manual thematic method, where the responses were transcribed with some catchy phrases retained in their original versions and contexts in the form of extracts or excerpts (see the result section for details).

Results

Table 1

Respondents' Distribution by Socio-Demographic Characteristics (n=364)

Variables	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)	Mean
L. G. As			
Onitsha North	184	50.5	
Ogbaru	180	49.5	
Total	364	100	
Gender			
Male	196	53.8	
Female	168	46.2	
Total	364	100	
Age(Years)			
20–30	72	19.8	
31-40	84	23.1	

41-50	75	20.6	44.49
51-60	58	15.9	
61-70	45	12.4	
71 & Above	30	8.2	
Total	364	100	
Residence			
Rural	180	49.5	
Urban	184	50.5	
Total	364	100	
Marital Statuses			
Married	166	45.6	
Divorced	82	22.5	
Separated	94	25.8	
Widowed	22	6.0	
Total	364	100	
Educational Level			
No Formal Education	45	12.4	
FSLC	60	16.5	
SSCE/GCE	88	24.5	
NCE/OND	81	22.3	
HND/BSc	64	17.6	
MSc/PhD	26	7.1	
Total	364	100	
Occupation			
Unemployed	45	12.4	
Student	30	8.2	
Apprentice	30	8.2	
Farming	54	14.8	
Civil Servant	95	26.1	
Business/Trading	105	28.8	
Other	5	1.4	
Total	364	100	
Religious Affiliation			
Christians	344	94.5	
Moslems	7	1.9	
Traditional African Religion	13	3.6	
Total	364	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 1 shows that 184 (50.5%) of the respondents were residing in Onitsha North, only 180 (49.5%) reside in Ogbaru. On their gender, 196(53.8%) were males while 164 (46.2%) were females. The mean age (\bar{x}) of the study participants is 44, this is very normal because at this age a normal Igbo person is

expected to have become married. Also, majority of the respondents 184(50.4%) were urban dwellers, while 180(49.5%) were rural dwellers. 166(45.6%) were married, 94(25.8%) separated, 82(22.5%) and 22(6.0%) were divorced and widowed respectively. However, the educational level of the highest participants was found to be SSCE/GCE 88(24.5%). This is followed by 81(22.3%) that had NCE/OND. The table also shows that 105(28.8%) participants were traders. This may be based on the fact that Anambra state is the centre of economic activities of the south-east Nigeria and beyond. Lastly, majority of the participants were Christians 334(94.5%), and few participants belong to other religion. It is not strange or surprising having close to 95% of the respondents as Christians since the study was conducted in a state which is predominantly Christian State.

Table 2

Respondents' Distribution by their Opinion on the Prevailing Social Consequences of Wife Battering in the study areas

Social Consequences of wife battering	Onitsha North		Ogbaru		Total
	F	%	F	%	
Body Injury	11	2.6	14	4.3	25
Death	10	3.0	4	.8	14
Miscarriage	17	5.0	16	4.1	33
Divorce/Separation	22	6.9	9	1.6	31
Nagging	20	5.1	36	10.0	55
Disunity or Lack of Love in the home	28	6.7	31	9.4	60
Stigmatization	6	1.8	14	3.7	20
Suicide/ Suicidal Attempt	9	2.3	3	1.5	12
Reprisal Beating	35	9.5	16	4.5	51
Children Poor Performance in School	8	1.9	12	3.1	20
Children Growing Up to be Aggressive/Batterers	6	1.8	14	3.7	20
Arrest and Detention of Batterers	12	3.9	11	2.4	23
Total	184	50.5	180	49.0	364

Source: 2019 Field Survey

Table 2 shows what the respondents consider as the social consequences of wife-battering in their areas. Respondents in Ogbaru LGA 36(10.0%) and 20(5.1%) Onitsha North LGA identified nagging as the leading social consequence of wife battering. This finding is in line with Onwe, Odio and Eze (2019); Okemgbo, Omideyi and Odimegwu (2002); and Herbert (1987) who observed that nagging wives are beaten by their husbands most often. Reprisal beating was identified by 35(9.5%) in Onitsha North LGA, 16(4.5%) in Ogbaru LGA. This is in line with findings of Olatunji (2017); Ebisi (2016); Ajayi (2015); Igbokwe (2013); Luckson (2013); Llika (2005) and Hindin (2003) when they observed that conservative culture reinforces revenge beating that plays into gender-based violence. This was followed by 31(9.4%) in Ogbaru LGA and 28(6.7%) in Onitsha North LGA who were of the view that disunity and lack of love is also a factor. This confirms the findings by Abolarin (2014); Adebayo (2014); Agbogu and Igbokwe (2015) when they noted that lack of love elevates the risk of domestic violence. Other social consequences include divorce 22(6.9%) in Onitsha North LGA, 9(1.6%) in Ogbaru LGA, while miscarriage was identified by 17 (5.0%) in Onitsha North LGA and 16(4.1%) in Ogbaru LGA. Children growing up to be aggressive and batterers were identified by 14(3.7%) in Ogbaru LGA and 6(1.8%) in Onitsha North LGA. This is in dissonance with Abayomi and Olabode (2013) who noted that domestic violence leads to deaths and dissolution of marriages.

Further still, stigmatization was identified by 14(3.7%) in Ogbaru LGA and 6(1.8%) in Onitsha North LGA, arrest and detention of batterers was revealed by 12(3.9) in Onitsha North LGA and

11(2.4%) in Ogbaru LGA. Body injury was identified by 11 (2.6%) in Onitsha North LGA and 14 (4.3%) in Ogbaru LGA. Death was identified by 10(3.0%) in Onitsha North LGA and 4(.8%) in Ogbaru LGA, suicide and suicidal attempts was identified by 9(2.3%) in Onitsha North LGA and 3(1.5%) in Ogbaru LGA. Children poor performance in schools was identified by 8(1.9%) in Onitsha North LGA and 12(3.1%) in Ogbaru LGA. This is in consonance with Young-Bruehl (2012) who noted that children and young persons who witness domestic violence live in constant fear, suffer self-blame and more likely to be child abuse victims.

An IDI interviewee stated thus;

“The social consequences are so many. Let me talk of one I think women are beginning to experience in this generation. But let me ask you madam, you’re a married woman, if your husband turns you into a punching bag every night won’t you run away? (*Both laugh*). You see that’s the truth, run away for your dear life. Divorce or at least separation from him is the only rational thing to do. So maybe that is why we are having increased incidence of divorce and separation. Unlike before, our ladies are more enlightened now” (IDI: School principal, Ogbaru).

However, another IDI participant had a different view.

“As a teacher with several years of experience let me tell you something I have observed, madam. You see most of these kids coming from homes characterized by incidence of wife battering, are usually very violent especially to their female classmates. They always act violently by bullying, fighting and using derogatory language on the females. The females from such homes too are usually aggressive and violent. In general, their academic performance is nothing to write home about. What happens at home affects the children” (IDI: school principal, Onitsha North).

Another IDI respondent stated thus;

“The social consequences are many oh. Sometimes a spouse may even die as a result of the battering. In this my palace, I and my cabinet members are even affected because most times some of these people will start fighting in our presence and we would have to separate fights. You know somehow somebody may take a punch meant for another, especially the uncontrollable ones. We are persistently confronted with settling this kind of family dispute. I even feel tired in some cases. Honestly, it is not a palatable phenomenon” (IDI: Igwe, Onitsha North).

From the findings, nagging is the most prevailing social consequence of wife-battering in the study areas. The study revealed that 36(10.0%) in Ogbaru LGA and 20(5.1%) in Onitsha North LGA identified nagging as the leading social consequence of wife battering. This was followed by reprisal beating 35(9.5%) in Onitsha North LGA and 16(4.5%) in Ogbaru LGA, while 31(9.4%) in Ogbaru LGA and 28(6.7%) in Onitsha North LGA were of the view that disunity and lack of love is also a factor. Other social consequences include divorce 22(6.9%) in Onitsha North LGA and 9(.16%) in Ogbaru LGA, while miscarriage was identified by 17 (5.0%) in Onitsha North LGA and 16(4.1%) in Ogbaru LGA. Children growing up to be aggressive and batterers was identified by 14(3.7%) in Ogbaru LGA and 6(1.8%) in Onitsha North LGA. Further still, stigmatization was identified by 14(3.7%) in Ogbaru LGA and 6(1.8%) in Onitsha North LGA, arrest and detention of batterers was revealed by 12(3.9) in Onitsha North LGA and 11(2.4%) Ogbaru respondents, body injury was identified by 11 (2.6%) Onitsha North and 14 (4.3%) in Ogbaru LGA. Death was identified by 10(3.0%) in Onitsha North LGA and 4(.8%) in Ogbaru LGA, suicide and suicidal attempts was identified by 9(2.3%) in Onitsha North LGA

and 3(1.5%) Ogbaru LGA, children poor performance in school was identified by 8(1.9) in Onitsha North LGA and 12(3.1%) in Ogbaru LGA. These findings align with Gurmu and Endale (2017); Oyediran (2016); Igwe (2015); Chukwuma (2002); Ezeilo (2013); Kawu (2013) who separately found amongst others, that refusal of sex, disrespect and challenging of a man's authority, having too many engagements outside the home and less attention to children or domestic chores, as well as having or suspecting a wife's sexual relationship outside the home could cause a man to batter his wife. More so, the findings equally corroborate the views of Olumeri (2015); Umeh and Akpede (2012); Owo (1994) who discovered that inability to give birth to a child, especially a male child leads to battering. This is true in Nigeria and indeed, most patriarchal societies, where serious premium is placed on male children. Where this expectation is not met; procreation is perceived to have been doomed. Also, the findings corroborate the views of Olatunji (2017); Fakunmoju, Bammeke, Oyekanmi, Temilola and George (2016); Umeh and Akpede (2012); Bitangaro (1999); Pocock and Cram (2011); Osofsky (2013), Ezebe, Anyanwu, Oyeoku and Abiogu (2013) who found nagging, disunity, divorce and body injury as consequences of wife-battering.

Test of hypothesis

Religious institutions are more likely to be most effective in settling wife-battering than non-religious institutions.

Table 3

Test of hypothesis

<i>Religious Affiliation</i>	<i>Religion as effective mechanism of settling wife-battering</i>		<i>Total</i> $\chi^2 = 17.367$ (N = 364) df = 1	χ^2 $P < .001$
	Not-Effective	Effective		
Religious	134 (43.6%)	173 (56.4%)	307(100%)	
Non-Religious	42 (73.7%)	15(26.3%)	57(100%)	
Total	176(48.4%)	188(51.6%)	364(100%)	

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Religious institution was found to be more effective in settling wife battering at $p < .001$ level of significance.

In other words, religious institutions are most effective in settling wife battering than non-religious institutions. This is possible in a highly religious society like Nigeria in general and Anambra State in particular where majority of the people perceive pastors, priests and other notable leaders in the church as the "mouth piece of God" and ready to adhere to their counsels.

Conclusion and recommendations

It was revealed by the study that the social determinants of wife-battering is associated with variables like denial of sex to a husband, infidelity (engaging in extra marital affairs), and inability of a woman to give birth to a male child. Others include lack of respect for the husband, online chatting with persons unknown to the husband, a woman's inability to cook for her husband etc. Also, findings from In-Depth Interview revealed that variables like anger and provocation, infidelity, wife disrespecting the husband, alcoholism etc are social determinants of wife-battering. More still, it was found out that the social consequences of wife-battering amongst others include reprisal beating and nagging. Others are disunity or lack of love in the home, body injury, miscarriage, divorce/ separation,

children growing up to be aggressive/batterers etc. Based on these findings, the study recommends the need for married couples to avoid issues that could result to nagging or disunity in the home. Also, emotionally incompatible couples should be allowed to get divorced. Finally, the government should encourage battered wives and children to get emotionally stabilized by establishing marriage counseling units in the communities that make up the Local Government Areas. And, that these units make use of the services of personality psychologists and social workers.

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