

Psychological Violence and Socio-Economic Development of Women in Uasin-Gishu County, Kenya

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Abstract

The growing corpus of studies on domestic violence continues to demonstrate that the vice, despite calls and efforts, is yet to be eliminated. As such, understanding gender violence requires a situation analysis that recognizes the effects of the larger social context on gender performances. This paper adds to this voice and seeks to understand the effects of psychological violence on the socio-economic development of women. By premising their arguments on the results of a study carried out in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya, the authors posit that in light of the callous approach taken by patriarchal authorities towards domestic violence against women, it is paramount to educate the populace on the “invisible” effects of domestic violence. Using a case study research design, and by employing a random sampling procedure, the authors engaged 120 women (30 each from Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital, Ngeria Prison, Eldoret Prison and Eldoret Police Station) who formed the study sample. Data was collected using questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions. The findings of the study demonstrated that psychological violence is rife in the study area. Moreover, the authors found out that psychological violence against women has an adverse effect on their socio-economic development. This paper therefore calls for a paradigm shift in the approach to domestic violence against women. It advocates for a more detailed look into the less visible effects of this vice. Unlike victims of physical violence who have signs which are, at times, easily visible, women who undergo psychological violence have a steeper ladder to climb since their suffering is not easy to discern. This scenario has been compounded by the misconception, perpetuated by patriarchal authorities, among the victims that such atrocities are part of family secrets and should remain so. The discussions in this paper are a great contribution to studies on domestic violence against women and contextualize new knowledge which will assist researchers and policy makers in understanding of various issues which are related to psychological domestic violence.

Keywords: psychological violence, domestic violence, women, Uasin-Gishu County, socio-economic development

1. Introduction

Marijke (2003) asserts that domestic violence is one of the most widespread human rights abuses and public health problems in the world today, affecting as many as one out of every three women. It's also an extreme manifestation of gender inequality, targeting women and girls because of their subordinate social status in society. The consequences of domestic violence are often devastating and long-term affecting women's and girls' physical health and mental wellbeing. At the same time, its ripple effects compromise the social development of other children in the household, the family as a unit, the communities where the individuals live and society as a whole.

Clarion (2004) asserts that whenever conflict occurs within a country, the female gender is usually exposed to more suffering than the male gender. In most cases where the prevalence of violence is high, women tend to suffer such violence more than men do. One area of violence where women as opposed to men are more exposed is domestic violence. Male spouses resort to violence to subdue their spouses instead of using dialogue and reason. Such men exploit the intimacy of the family relationship to mistreat their wives and daughters. The violence is both physical and non physical. Excessive verbal abuse, threats, coercion and emotional and economic abuse are used to intimidate and keep women in perpetual fear. In addition, an act of violence is committed when men do not provide for their families because they squander family resources. Kenyan law does not have a special offense of assault against a spouse. The law treats assault within the family as general assault.

Domestic violence and abuse is not limited to obvious physical violence. Domestic violence can also mean endangerment, criminal coercion, kidnapping, unlawful imprisonment, trespassing, harassment, and stalking. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition, domestic violence is: "the inflicting of physical injury by one family or household member on another; also: a repeated / habitual pattern of such behavior (Merriam Webster, 2011). Understanding gender violence requires a situation analysis that recognizes the effects of the larger social context on gender performances. When men abuse women in intimate relationships, they use the violence to define their own gendered identities. A barterer often wants to show the woman that he is in control or to prove to other men that he controls her. He may view the violence as discipline that the woman deserves or has provoked. The scope of gender violence is continually changing. Gender violence is now an umbrella term for a wide range of violation from rape during wartime to sexual abuse in

prisons to insults and name calling within marriages. International activists continue to expand the scope of violence against women, to include cultural practices such as female genital cutting, illegal acts such as dowry deaths, the trafficking of women as sex workers, the effects of internal wars such as displaced people and the vulnerability to violence experienced by migrants in the context of contemporary globalization.

Gender violence occurs throughout the world, but it takes quite different forms in different social contexts. It is located in particular sets of social relationships, structures of power, and meaning of gender (Sally, 2009). According to a review of 50 studies from around the world, between 10 to 50 percent of women have experienced some act of violence by an intimate partner at some point in their lives (Heise et al., 1994). This and an earlier World Bank review highlight some of the characteristics that often accompany violence in intimate relationships: women are at the greatest risk from men they know; physical violence is almost always accompanied by psychological abuse; most women who suffer any physical aggression by a partner generally experience multiple acts over time; violence against women cuts across socioeconomic class and religious and ethnic lines and men who batter their partners exhibit profound controlling behaviors.

Violence towards women is a global challenge. It is also endemic throughout Africa and wears many faces. Domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment and female circumcision are but a few. They embody disrespect and powerlessness that permeates women's lives. They are also examples of problems where more changes in law have little or no effect on practices. This problem is a legal challenge that must be met by all of us in pursuits of human rights (Kivutha & Lawrence, 2006).

Gender inequality based violence and sexual harassment and abuse are widespread in our society and beyond. As Chung (2013) asserts, the study of male violence towards women has been a major and well documented contribution from radical feminism. This is the main area in which arguments for the generality of women's oppression by men can be supported. It has been possible to show the prevalence of violence not only in western societies, but in many other parts of the world where women are dependent on men and are physically abused by men. The possibility of rape, wife beating or sexual harassment at work cuts across the boundaries of nationality, class, race and religion. The forms that violence can take can be both general in the case of murder and rape, or culturally specific as in the case of dowry death in India (where young wives are murdered because of this inadequate dowries) some forms of physical violence are widely used such as wife beating, others exploit the spread of industrialization by using obscene telephone calls, sexual harassment at work and prostitution. It's through the use of threats of violence that men in general oppress women. Violence has been and is still an important mechanism for maintaining the subordination of women to men.

Violence against women is reinforced by doctrines of privacy and the sanctity of the family, and by legal codes which link individual, family or community honor to women's sexuality. However, the greatest cause of violence against women is government tolerance and inaction. Its most significant consequence is fear, which inhibits women's social and political participation (UNDP, 1997).

2. The Debate

A lot of attention has been given to the effects of physical violence against women in the domestic front. As such, this has left other victims of the vice suffering in silence. It need not be gainsaid that domestic violence takes various dimensions. The least discussed is the psychological one. Consequently, this paper seeks to explore the effects of psychological violence against women on their social-economic development. Most women are tasked with the responsibility of "home makers". This, therefore, results in the fact that even when they experience domestic violence, their psychological conditioning is such that they must persevere and suffer in silence for the good of the home. In many instances, the woman is also dependent on the abusive spouse for sustenance. The vagaries of psychological violence therefore result in an undermining of the woman's socio-economic development and contribution to the society since she not only suffers "invisible" abuse, but her morale and dignity are deeply hurt.

3. Theoretical Framework

This paper anchors its discussion on selected tents of the social learning theory which seeks to explain family violence in terms of a "learned phenomena", that is, the intergenerational link between violence and individuals' learned behavioral role (Johnson, 1998; Sally, 2009, 1985; 1997). Finkelhor et al. (1988) have averred that those who are abused suffer from a sense of powerlessness, stigma, and inability to trust others, and eventual inability to contribute towards the development of the community which impairs the development of normal coping mechanisms leading to violence. The assumption is that violence remains a learned response transmitted and reinforced across family generations (Carden, 1994). Consequently, family violence is viewed as a symptom of dysfunctional family relationships and key concepts include learned helplessness, socialized roles and modeling effects. The danger in applying this understanding is the tendency to assume women are helpless victims. Further, this is exacerbated by notions that reduce family members and self-esteem issues of women. The difficulty of these assumptions is the tendency to target interventions in the form of couple counseling and family therapy,

thus individualizing the nature of the problem. Disclosure of violence by a family member during a treatment session may precipitate violence and lead to its escalating once outside the counseling setting.

4. Literature Review: “Socializing” Psychological Violence

The world we live in is characterized with violence against women. This is present in many forms like battering, sexual assault and abuse, female genital mutilation and rape, in war and peacetime e.t.c. domestic violence is the fate of millions of women all over the world and these are affecting their productivity both in the homes, community and places of work. There are different types of domestic violence which occur at different levels within the family, community and the state. Domestic violence is a universal reality which exists in all societies regardless of income, class and culture. It would be difficult to find one woman whom at one time or other in her lifetime had not been afraid merely because she is a woman. Women who are particularly vulnerable are those who live in precarious conditions or who are discriminated against on the basis of race, language, ethnic group, culture, age, opinion, religion or membership in a minority group. Research studies on DVAW in Turkey state that violence results from socio-cultural, socio-economic, and psychological factors (Kocaik et al., 2007; Mayda & Akkuş, 2005; Vahip & Doganavsargil, 2006). These factors include low education level, low family income, unemployment of the husband and wife, cultural background of the family, history of childhood abuse and either the man's or the woman's approval of violence (Civi et al., 2008). Results of a study conducted by Mayda and Dilak (2005) show that as the level of education of either women or men increases, the violent behavior of men decreases and the women's rate of tolerance for domestic violence decreases. Another study done by (Ergin et al., 2006) found that women with a very low educational level and family income were more often faced with all types of violence. Moreover, patriarchal norms still dominate Turkish society and have a strong impact on spousal relationships (Erturk, 2007; Kocaik et al., 2007).

In many countries, including Kenya, women are socialized not only to accept, tolerate and to rationalize domestic violence but to remain silent about such experience (KNBS, 2010). The Kenya demographic Health Survey (KDHS) of 2008/9 indicates that one third (31.8%) of women aged 15-49 years in Coast Province had experienced violence in 12 months preceding the survey (KNBS, 2010). Currently, there are no accurate data on domestic violence in Kenya and therefore not readily available and published statistics are based only on the cases that are reported to authorities. Women living in poor households, especially those in urban informal settlements are more likely to have experienced violence at the hands of their spouses (Johnston, 2002). Studies carried out by NGOs in Kenya indicate that over half of all reported cases of intimate partner violence occur in urban informal settlements which are characterized by high levels of unemployment, poverty and physical insecurity.

These internalized social norms, which sanction domestic violence, lead women to perceive that the violence is her fault; often because of shame and denial, religion or culture, women believe such behavior must be endured to preserve the marriage or family (Civi et al., 2008; Gulcur, 1999; Kocaik et al., 2007; Mayda & Akkuş, 2005). Also, in patriarchal societies, men do not allow their wives to work outside of the house. They believe that a working woman would neglect her in-house duties and increase her decision-making authority inside the family. Under such circumstances, the man feels threatened because he can no longer dominate his wife. This leads to conflicts in the relationship, often followed by a violent act by the husband. Jewkes' study (as cited in Civi et al., 2008) indicates that dominant men will resort to violent acts in order to resolve their identity crises. Many researchers have discussed violence as a learned social act for both men and women (Civi et al., 2008).

Women and men who have experienced violence at home in childhood perceive violent acts as normal behavior for punishment when conflicts occur. This psychological factor increases women's tolerance towards violence, thereby reducing their ability to leave a potentially violent relationship, and empowering men to use more violence (Ergin et al., 2006). Risk of violence is greatest in societies, where the use of violence in many situations is perceived as a normal aspect of family life, including by women themselves (Jewkes, 2002, as cited in Civi et al., 2008; Erturk, 2007). A Turkish Demographic and Health Survey (2003) asked a sample of women whether a husband was justified in battering his wife if she argued with him, if she spent too much money, if she burned the food, if she neglected the children or if she refused to have sex with him. Overall, 39.2% of women accepted at least one of these reasons as a justification for wife battering (Erturk, 2007).

Approximately 29% of women and 10% of men in the USA have experienced rape, physical violence, and stalking by an intimate partner and reported at least one measured impact related to these forms of violence in the relationships (Black, 2011). Victims of repeated violence experienced serious consequences than victims of one-time incident (Johnson & Leone, 2005). The effects of domestic violence go hand in hand with the forms of violence. The costs of violence against women to the Australian economy can be estimated by considering a number of categories. There are costs associated with pain, suffering, health care and premature mortality. There are costs of being absent from work as well as consumption-related costs such as replacing damaged property. There are costs associated with children witnessing and living with violence (including child protection services).

The police, courts system, counseling and violence prevention programs comprise a final cost category (National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, 2009).

Physical violence goes hand in hand with psychological abuse; depression remains the foremost response with most of battered women reporting depression. Emotional or psychological abuse can be verbal or nonverbal. Its aim is to chip away at the confidence and independence of victims with the intention of making her compliant and limiting her ability to leave. Emotional abuse includes verbal abuse such as yelling, name-calling, blaming and shaming. Isolation, intimidation, threats of violence and controlling behavior. Many abused women define the psychological effects of domestic abuse as having a 'more profound effect on their lives- even where there have been life-threatening or disabling physical violence. Despite this, there is almost always pressure to define domestic abuse in terms of actual or threatened, physical violence (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

5. Methodology

The study employed a case study research design which is descriptive. This approach seeks to collect data without manipulating the research variables or the respondents in an attempt to assess the influence of physical domestic violence on the socio-economic development of women. Analysis of data generated from this study was mainly from snowball sampling; using both quantitative and qualitative tools. The snowballing sampling technique is a systematic non-probabilistic purposive sampling method that is very apt for qualitative research. Highly qualitative and exploratory studies call for a purposive non-probability sampling design, which is not after the representativeness of samples. A purposive non-probability sampling design relies heavily on the availability of respondents, especially those who are difficult to locate.

This study used random sampling so as to give a chance to many individuals to be selected as sample representative of the population. The numbers representing the women were written on small pieces of papers and then rolled and placed in a small container and then shuffled each time before picking a woman so as to give an equal chance to be sampled. The total sample population for the study was 120 women. This was based on Mugenda and Mugenda's formula for determining sample size when the target population is less than 10,000 respondents. It was calculated based on the target population of 175.

An introductory letter was requested for from the university to collect data. It indicated what the study was all about and why it was carried out. This enabled the respondents to agree to participate in the study. The data was collected using questionnaires which were administered to the sample population, and clarifications were made where necessary. The survey was created using suitable questions modified from research and individual questions formed by the researcher.

The questionnaire comprised of 29 questions which were related to the participant's perception regarding physical domestic violence. After validation of the questionnaire by the supervisors, the researchers distributed the questionnaires to the women. The respondents were assured of confidentiality of the survey sheets since their identities were not required. The women were given time to respond to the questionnaires and then the researchers collected the questionnaires the following day.

6. Results and Discussion

From the study, 26 (21.7%) women reported experiencing violence almost on a daily basis; 28 (23%) reported being rarely abused; 64 (53%) women frequently experienced violence and 2 (1.7%) did not respond whether they were being abused or not. This indicates that most women do not want to come up and express their views on domestic violence, they think that they might break their families.

From the data obtained during the study, it is clear that majority of women experienced domestic violence in one way or another during the course of their life time. The most common and frequent form of violence experienced by the respondents are what can be classified as economic, psychological/ emotional. Economic violence took several forms including deprivation of women by their spouses, violence resulting from sex peddling transactions and denial of women by their male spouses to engage in any form of business. Economic deprivation mainly affects women who are housewives and not engaged in gainful employment or business. Further, economic violence has to do with differences arising out of inheritance and succession issues.

6.1 Prevalence of Psychological Violence

Respondents were asked to state the whether they were subjected to psychological violence. From the results obtained, and as shown in Figure 1, 94 (78.3%) women reported having been psychologically abused. Psychological violence resulted in the attribution of blame and guilt to women for problems in the relationship. Constant comparisons with other women impacted on victims' self-concept and self-worth. Another form of emotional abuse used by men was emotional withdrawal, such as long periods of silence which could continue for weeks, 'sulking' and withdrawal of any interest and engagement with the partner. Only 26 (22%) women reported having never experienced psychological abuse.

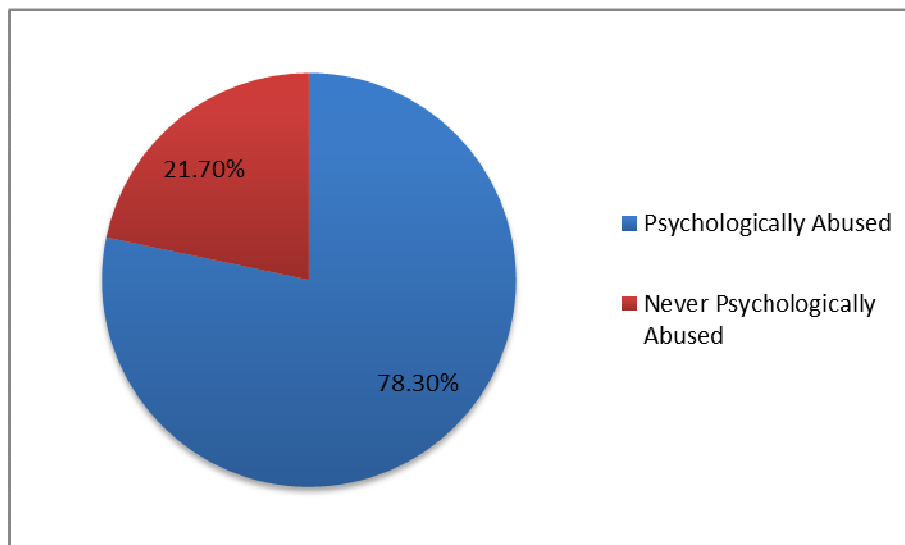


Figure 1: Prevalence of Psychological Abuse among the Respondents

6.2 Employment Status of Women and Psychological Violence

Respondents were asked to state their employment status and they responded as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents' Employment Status

Response	No of women	Percent
Employed	50	41.7
Not Employed	70	58.3
Total	120	100.0

As demonstrated in Table 1, a greater percentage of women (70; 58%) were unemployed and only 50 (42%) had some form employment. Employment plays a greater role in many families across the world. This is also significant because it intimates an element of financial dependence on the male spouses. As such, the threat of withdrawal of financial support serves as a deterrent towards the victims of psychological violence speaking out. The lack of employment also means that the woman's value addition to the socio-economic development of the society is curtailed.

6.3 Educational Level of Women and Psychological Violence

Previous literature showed that educational level plays a greater role in the lives of women. The respondents were therefore asked to state their level of education and the responses are as shown in Table 2. This was based on the assumption that the more educated the respondent was, the higher the likelihood of being knowledgeable about psychological violence.

Table 2: Educational Level of the Respondents

Response	No of women	Percent
Below Primary	30	25.0
Primary	23	19.2
Secondary	27	22.5
College	24	20.0
University	16	13.3
Total	120	100.0

Table 2 indicates that 30(25%) women were uneducated, 23(19%) women had primary level of education, 27(23%) women attained secondary education, 24(20%) women had attained college education and 16, who constituted 13% of the women had university level of education. This indicates that there is very high likelihood that women who had experienced psychological violence were not aware of the avenues of addressing the same. They could also be easily attributing it to the societal roles of a woman and thus not viewing it as abuse. During FGDs, it was apparent that most of the women had been conditioned to accept psychological violence as part of life. For some, they seemed to argue that as long as their spouses did not physically assault them, then the other forms of abuse were a small price to pay for the sake of their families' reputation.

From the data collected, it is evident that most households who experience domestic violence are characterized by high unemployment and low educational levels. This resonates with the assertions by Mayda

and Dilak (2005) that the level of education of women has a direct relation with women's rate of tolerance for domestic violence and Ergin et al.'s (2006) observation that women with very low educational level and family income were more often faced with psychological violence.

6.4 Social Conditioning and Psychological Violence against Women

From the study findings, it was evident that most women, 26 (21.7%), reported their cases at police stations' gender section, 12 (10.0%) went to the medical professionals for assistance, 8 (6.7%) visited domestic violence offices to report the matter, 11 (9.2%) shared their experiences with their fellow women in the respective women groups, 17 (14.2%) shared their ordeal with their friends, 19 (15.8%) ran to their family members and 27 (22.5%) did not give any feedback on the kind of action they took. From the data collected, it was demonstrated that due to the low levels of women's education, high unemployment and cultural beliefs, women are not aware of whom or which institution to approach whenever they experienced violence from their intimate partners. This is shown by 91 (75.8%) women reporting that whenever they had conflict, they hesitated to seek help.

7. Conclusion

This paper has shown that psychological violence is prevalent in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. 94 (78.3%) women reported having been psychologically abused. Due to cultural socialization, women who are victims of psychological violence end up attributing blame and guilt to themselves. Women who are in a relationship where there is psychological abuse are left with no option than to persevere. As a result, this negatively impacts on their self-concept and self worth. Consequently, these women suffer from hypertension and gastro-intestinal complications which affected their contribution to the society thus ultimately undermining their socio-economic development and that of the society at large.

This is because they lack resources needed for daily survival and have to depend on the abusive spouse for substance. It is therefore of paramount importance for the concerned stakeholders to institute mechanism aimed at ensuring economic independence of women in the society. This will go a long way towards alleviating the economic dependence of women on the partners – a great bottleneck to leaving the relationship, caring for their children and even improving their livelihood.

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