

Intimate Partner Violence Correlates and Coping Strategies: A Qualitative Inquiry Among Ijesa of South-West Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Intimate partner violence (IPV) remains a global public health concern. Nonetheless, understanding the issues of IPV among the Ijesa remained scarce in Nigeria. The paper, therefore, investigated the types, factors and coping strategies adopted by victims of Intimate partner violence. The paper made use of qualitative data (6 FGDs and 3 IDIs) from a study on Intimate Partner Violence and reproductive health consequences, which was carried out in six local government areas in Ijesaland of Osun State. Data were analysed using content analysis. The response of the participants indicated that the incidence of intimate partner violence is not new in Ijesaland and that physical, verbal/psychological, and sexual violence are types of intimate partner violence experienced by women. Immaturity, infertility, inadequate child caring, use of psychoactive substance like alcohol, household living arrangement, knowledge of spousal extramarital affairs, witnessing inter-generational violence, issues of sexual intercourse, gender role expectations/power play, monetary and meal preparation issues are some of the factors driving IPV. Endurance is the main coping strategy because there is the belief that the incidence of IPV will cease one day, while other take solace in their religious beliefs and separation is regarded as last resort. Some of the mechanisms for conflict resolution includes intervention by third parties such as parents, traditional/community, and religious leaders. It was recommended that there is the need to have effective enlightenment and education programmes at the individual, community, and societal levels much before young people enter marriage to ensure a reduction in the incidence of IPV.

Keywords: Intimate Partner Violence, Nigeria, Coping Strategies, Ijesa, Women, Gender

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

International concern about the issue of intimate partner violence continues to grow. It is a global plague that takes place in public and private spaces [1]. The most prevalent form of gender-based violence is that which occur within intimate partners [2, 3]. An intimate partner or relationship is defined as a person with whom an individual has a close, personal relationship that may be characterized by emotional connectedness, regular contact or sexual behaviour, identification as a couple, and cohabitation. Intimate partners may include current or former spouses [4]. In this paper the intimate relationship is that of marital unions.

IPV refers to any behaviour in an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm, including aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviour [5]. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is also said to include physical, emotional, sexual, psychological, or financial abuse between intimate partners [6].

Partner violence is the most common form of violence against women (VAW) globally [7]. It is estimated that 3 out of every 10 women above 15 years have some form of violence by an intimate partner at least once in their lifetime [8, 9]. This summary estimate, may differ across the various settings women may find themselves by levels of the incidence and type [10].

Intimate partner violence (IPV) in sub-Saharan Africa affects 36% of the population [11]. Nigeria is reported as being part of the countries with high incidence of gender-based violence in sub-Saharan Africa [12]. There are diverse combinations of factors that interrelate to increase the likelihood of either perpetrating violence or being a victim and the socio-ecological model gives an opportunity for the understanding of the various issues [10].

There is the culture of silence that surrounds incidence of intimate partner violence in that it is often seen as being in the private domain as such this culture of silence does not allow for the condemnation of the act on the part of the perpetrator [13].

Also, despite the increasing recognition that intimate partner violence is a global public health concern, the determinants and consequences have not been fully studied in developing countries especially population-based studies [14]. Further, the correlates of intimate partner violence against Nigerian women in general and the Ijesa women, and the coping strategies adopted by the victims are yet to be fully established and documented. The Ijesa is one of the sub-ethnic groups within the Yoruba ethnic group in South West Nigeria. Intimate partner violence occurs in all countries, irrespective of social, economic, religious, or cultural group. The focus of this study is on the correlates of intimate partner violence and the coping strategies adopted by victims in among Ijesa women.

Studies have shown that witnessing violence in a home while growing up has a significant association with such a witness perpetrating violence against a partner later in life [15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 14, 26, 27, 28]. Women that witnessed violence between parents may construct attachment models along dominance-subordination and victim-perpetrator perspectives (Gage, 2005). Therefore, such women when exposed to intimate partner violence would fall back on their understanding of what relationships are about, who they are in relationships, and what to expect from a relationship partner. The implication is that such women do often see intimate partner violence as a normal part of intimate relationships. A woman who believes that a man has justifications for wife abuse will experience intimate partner violence. Witnessing intimate partner violence while growing-up is an important correlate of sexual violence [14].

Alcohol has been found to lower inhibitions and it makes it more likely that people will misinterpret verbal and nonverbal cues [29] which may lead to one form of intimate partner violence or another. The reality is that part of the connotation between violence and alcohol use could be that men's drinking becomes a source of arguments in relationships [10]. A study in rural Nigeria also showed a strong link between men's drinking and perpetration of partner violence [30].

The historical root of intimate partner violence dates to patriarchy where husbands and fathers controlled everything. Patriarchal beliefs sustain community tolerance of intimate partner violence [31]. In patriarchal societies, husband demands obedience, and wives suffer battering and other forms of violence for challenging their position. Many societies are primarily patriarchal, with men considered to have greater value than women and accorded privileges - including power over women's behaviour, entitlement with respect to marital and extra-marital sex, and command of the economic and political sphere [10]. The Ijesa is a typical patriarchal society

Intimate partner violence occurs when the woman knows or protests about her husband's extramarital affairs, as such men seek to re-establish their equilibrium and assert their

authority by being violent [10]. Thus, issues of extramarital affairs are correlates of intimate partner violence.

Childlessness have also been found to be associated with high risk of intimate partner violence [32]. This may be due to the pro-natalist disposition of the Yoruba in general and the Ijesa. It may also be because a couple not having any child may be a source of friction in the family that could escalate to violence.

It is expected that longer marriage duration would significantly reduce a woman's risk of experiencing intimate partner violence [32]. This is predicated on the fact that the length of stay in a union by a couple would enhance their ability to understand one another and they would have been able to evolve a process of internal conflict resolution.

The paper made use of qualitative data (6 FGDs and 3 IDIs) from a study on Intimate Partner Violence and reproductive health consequences, which was carried out in six local government areas in Ijesaland of Osun State. Data were analysed using content analysis. Due to the small sample size in this study, the results cannot be generalised; but the purpose of this research is to generate meaningful, in-depth qualitative data to explore the correlates and the coping strategies adopted by victims of intimate partner violence.

FINDINGS

Types of Intimate partner violence

The incidence of intimate partner violence is not new in Ijesaland, but it is on the increase. Some of the reasons for intimate partner violence may be due to either the husband or the wife.

In the days of our fathers, they fought and quarrelled, but it was not as intense as it is now. By my thinking, men beat their wives more now than in the olden days. This is because in the olden days, before a fight ensured, a wife would have offended her husband several times. There are differences in men; some with little mistakes from the woman she is beaten. Even leads to divorce these days. For the man, due to extramarital affairs he will no longer be contented or satisfied with the behaviours of his wife. Or that the man may get back home drunk and just picks up fight easily. But in the olden days, there was better understanding between husbands and wives". (IDI with a Traditional Leader)

There are many types of violence. Sometimes the husband will decide not to greet his wife or even not to eat her food to show that he is fighting her. For some men, they beat up their wives when they have quarrels and there will be much noise in the whole neighbourhood, whereas for some even though they have misunderstanding nobody will know; even when a visitor comes in, they will pretend and portray that they love each other, but what is hidden is more than anything. (FGD with Educated Women)

There is physical violence in marital unions. Some couples do engage in physical combats and in most cases, they go to courts for divorce. Some go to the extent that the woman will bring members of her family and they will be shouting on the man, so there is physical violence. (FGD with Educated Youths)

Physical, verbal/psychological, and sexual violence are types of intimate partner violence that women in Ijesaland experience.

Factors of Intimate Partner Violence

Women in Ijesa land are susceptible to the incidence of intimate partner violence irrespective of the type of marital union.

Nowadays, there are more incidences of intimate partner violence. There was much order and organisation in the olden days. ...But now even with one wife, there is problem and more if you have many wives. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

Intimate partner violence is more prevalent in polygamous unions (echo). (FGD with Educated Women)

In the words of a female teacher, men who beat their wives are regarded as not being “educated”, irrespective of the level of education.

My own thinking is that it is those who are not educated that still beat their wives. Those who are educated now believe that women are not slaves. (IDI with a Teacher/Housewife)

Immaturity

The incidence of physical violence could resort to the couple taking each other to courts for the dissolution of their union. It is opined that the incidence of physical violence in a marital union is an indication of immaturity of one or both couple before being married.

It seems that maturity and age go together. If a person was not ripe for marriage and he/she enter the marriage institution, such people are likely to continue to fight until they become matured. (FGD with Educated Youths)

Infertility

Infertility (primary) has been expressed as another probable cause for the incidence of intimate partner violence. Childlessness of a woman is likely to increase the chances of a woman experiencing intimate partner violence among other reasons.

Some of the problems between couples may not be more than the issue of childlessness. (FGD with Educated Men)

... if for any reason there is delay in having children, such could lead to fights. The woman may think the problem is with her husband, so the man will be thinking it is her wife's problem, because of this they begin to consult all sorts of people including herbalists and native doctors. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

... when a couple is childless, it leads to problems and ... failure of the husband to be alive to his responsibilities could lead to problems. (FGD with Educated Women)

Inadequate Child Caring

Some women experience intimate partner violence because their husbands believe such a woman is not caring for the children adequately.

...there are many things that could lead to violence. Part of which is failure to take care of the children. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

Use of Alcohol

Another reason for the incidence of intimate partner violence is the consumption of alcohol by the husbands. It is believed that use of alcohol which is a psychoactive substance affects behaviour, which makes a man react over seemingly flimsy issues that would normally be tolerated. Thus, women whose husbands do not consume alcohol have lower chances of experiencing intimate partner violence.

There are some people that are very gentle, they are not violent or troublesome. But by engaging in drinking alcohol or all sorts of alcoholic drinks, they tend to be unduly influenced. When such a man gets drunk, he could become violent over issues that he would normally have laughed over. Once the effect of the alcohol wanes, he will then regret his behaviour and blames his behaviour on alcohol. (FGD with Educated Men)

...when such a man gets drunk, and may be himself and his wife are sharing leisure together and joking with one another, he may become violent over issues that he would normally have laughed over. (FGD with Men)

Household living arrangements

There might be incidence of intimate partner violence when at least a person outside the immediate nuclear family is living with the couple. There is some level of hostility or misunderstanding between husband and wife resulting from the presence of parent-in-laws, drivers, and house-helpers (Ajala, 2008). It is not the presence of the parent-in-laws that leads to the incidence of intimate partner violence but their attitudes and interference in the relationship between the couple. It is the expectations of these people that are not met, or because the couple may not be living in conformity with the views or patterns of these relations that serves as a catalyst to the incidence of intimate partner violence.

Things are better when couples live outside of the extended family. When a man is living with the extended family, they may interfere firstly, in his choice of wife, telling the man who he is to marry. They may even be complaining that ever since he married his wife things have turned the other way. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

... another thing that could lead to problems is if either of the in-laws intrude in the affairs of the couple. Say the wife's mother-in-law comes to visit and she is complaining about the sort of soup cooked, and she is asserting that if the wife continues in such a manner then her son will not be able to make headway in life. If this continues, it will be the beginning of problems. (FGD with Elderly men)

...The mother of the husband also causes problems between the man and his wife. An instance is when in the olden days about one shilling may be enough to prepare stew and if now the wife wants to take ₦500.00 to the market the mother-in-law may exclaim and wonder why she is going to the market with ₦500.00 at once (laughs). She may begin to say that her daughter-in-law spends so much on soup and which explains why they have not advanced so much. Such a mother-in-law would cause problems. Even when any in-law comes, either brother, sister or relations and the wife begins to ask her husband on how much he proposes to give to the relation, if he proposes to give ₦300 and the woman complains that the man should have given such a relation ₦50.00 after some time such may cause intimate partner violence. (IDI with a Traditional Leader)

...Also, when people live in a family house, problems may arise. For example, there was a couple I know in which the woman killed a chicken in the morning and other members of the household had expectations that she will give parts of it to them. And when this was not done problems erupted. Living with extended family could be a cause of the problem. There is this case of an elderly woman who made request about food from her daughter-in-law and she stylishly refused, but this woman got into their kitchen and served herself to her taste. This then became a source of worry for this young couple till they moved out to their own house; thus, the family members could

be a big source of problems between couples. Things are better when couples do live outside of the extended family. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

Then for those members of the extended family and if they are relations of the wife, and if the couple had misunderstanding that often leads to fight between them. The relation of the wife may complain about the sort of treatment the man is giving to their daughter or sister, some even just conclude that the man is bad. It may be the other way-round such that some may even come and tell the husband that the wife is bad, instead for such people to intervene by resolving their differences. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

This is in line with the general belief that the presence of parent-in-laws enhances quarrels between the woman and her husband. The rivalry between the wife and the mother-in-law contributes to the chances of incidence of intimate partner violence, even when a woman is the victim.

There are many difficulties, for husband and wife living with the husband's mother, husband's siblings, in such circumstances there are numerous difficulties. There is really nothing you do that will please such a mother-in-law, by that there will be misunderstanding between husband and wife. Sometimes the husband and his wife may have some things they want to do or want to have some private discussions, such a mother-in-law would like to know what they are doing or what they want to do, cases like that are numerous and often lead to quarrels between husband and wife. The in-laws are the ones who cause the problem...they will be the people to notice what the wife has done wrongly, and will tell her husband. (FGD with Educated Women)

Knowledge of extramarital affairs

Also, a woman's knowledge of her husband's involvement in extramarital affairs continue to have effect on intimate partner violence.

It may be that the wife having heard of her husband's involvement in extramarital affairs and she enquires from her husband and if the husband responds to her angrily, such instances may lead to fight. (FGD with Educated Youths)

The man or the woman being involved with extramarital affairs is a factor for intimate partner violence. (IDI with a Traditional Leader)

There may be fights, for example, those who engage in extramarital affairs, and it gets to the knowledge of their wife, there will be problem. (FGD with Educated Women)

Yes, husbands and wives do have quarrels. Let me say that for those who profess to have one wife, they often engage in extramarital relationships, some hide under the cloak of being Christians, yet they are not satisfied with having just a single wife and they will always want to have sexual intercourse with every other woman by so doing problems/fights ensue. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

The above views expressed by the participants in the different FGDs and IDIs is in tandem with the findings of Ajala, 2008 that when a woman does not know of her husband's involvement in extramarital relationships she is not likely to experience intimate partner violence.

Witnessing Inter-generational violence

A woman's chance of experiencing intimate partner violence is significantly affected by her having witnessed violence against her mother while growing up (Ajala, 2008). This is supported by the views expressed in the FGD excerpt below.

... disrespect to mothers all these are from home. It may just be that the mother is usually disrespectful to the father and as such she transferred the same attitude to her husband, which is why it is said that charity begins at home. It is also said that when a goat is climbing a wall, it traces the footpath of the father/mother and climbs in a similar pattern. (IDI with a Traditional Leader)

... if the couple do not desist from fighting, the children would think they are doing what is good and if the child is a male, he would want to repeat what his father did to his mother and if the child is a female, upon becoming an adult, such a person may have the attitude that her mother does not tolerate any nonsense from her father when she was young and she may begin to behave in a similar manner to her mother and this may hinder them having a happy home on the long run. (FGD with Educated Women)

Issues of Sexual intercourse

In some marital unions incidence of intimate partner violence results from attitude of the couple to issues of sexual intercourse. The denial of sex sometimes lead to the incidence of violence, though it was reported that some women deny their husband sex as a form of punishment.

...some women would like to deny their husband sex as a form of punishment, if this is so the man may resort to violence to make the woman sane. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

There are different types of women. For some, if she does not have sex daily she may not be able to sleep but there are others before she will allow her husband have sex with her will take a long time probably until the community leader intervenes, so there are various types of women, readily for some women they are not bothered. But for men it could cause violence (IDI with a Traditional Leader)

Gender role expectations/ Power play

The patriarchal nature of the Ijesa community is still strong, even in this century, the views expressed in the different sessions of FGDs with men is an indication that there is still some degree of power play between men and women in Ijesaland.

Once I am the husband then you must do all I want, when this is not done there is problem. You must respect me and members of my family. You did not only marry me, if she is disrespectful there would be violence. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

If a woman does not respect her in-laws or does not accept them or even when the woman disrespects her husband before his friends are some of the things that could lead to violence. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

It is sometimes because the man wants his wife to be submissive to his parents and that whatever directives his parents issue the woman must heed them, because they do not understand one another and when the woman does not want to heed to such, it brings problems, pains, and agonies. such could lead to all forms of violence including physical, psychological, and verbal abuse. You see in such situations; the man would want to show his authority and the woman may also want to show that she has some

power. These could lead to the couple keeping malice with one another for a while. (IDI with a Teacher/Housewife)

According to the participants in some of the FGD sessions, the sort of upbringing a woman has determines the respect she would have for her husband. It is the opinion of the participants that the training mothers give to their daughters in the olden days prepared the woman for the situation she will be faced with after being married. This is a way in which the patriarchal influence on gender power continue to pan out. This is part of the negative gender role expectations, wherein the woman is expected to be subservient to the man.

Before now, mothers train their children properly and the children then are patient enough to listen to instructions. Then wives respect their husbands properly and they treat their husbands like gods, so they give their husbands due respect, so before a girl becomes married she would have learnt that a woman must give her husband due respect, but now everybody is free to do what they like (FGD with Educated Youths)

Nevertheless, among the participants of the FGD with educated women, they do not think that a woman should be a victim of intimate partner violence on the basis that the husband is the 'head', that is, the superior partner in the relationship.

For some men who come home late often and if for a day the woman asks on why he stays out late, such may lead to violence. He may say that he is the one that married the woman and would accuse such a woman of disrespecting him and would beat the woman under the guise that he is the head. While it may be true that the man is the head, it does not mean that the woman should not be able to talk to her husband if he is doing what is bad. (FGD with Educated Women)

The views of the participants of the FGDs show that Ijesa men believe that civilisation is eroding the powers and privileges men have and this is leading to more problems in many homes.

...civilisation has caused a lot of problems, women now have so much freedom. The way things are now, is such that the man cannot make decisions concerning his extended family without first consulting with his wife. For example, a man decides to pay his extended family members a visit the next day and tells his wife, the woman may say he cannot go on the visit then, the woman would say since she was not told before now, that such a trip could not be made, even when the man explains the reason(s) for the trip, the woman will not agree.

Now civilisation has changed things such that nowadays for a man to do anything for his extended family members his wife must know about such, if the wife was not aware and the man goes ahead to do anything, problems will erupt. There is a case in this our area, the man ought to have visited his extended family here but the reason for his not coming was because his wife said he cannot come. My question is that, is this man not the head of his home? And he is now the father to the entire extended family, and he is now in the position of husband to his father's wives even though they are aged, but his wife still insists that the man should not visit his aged mother. I think the reason for this is civilisation which should not be. In the olden days, if a man is going anywhere, he just tells his wife that he is going to 'so so and so place' and the response of the woman will just be don't be long, have a nice time, but now civilisation does not allow for the man to take decisions alone without planning with his wife. If he goes, there will be problem. Even (all laughs) it has gotten to the point of spending money where the woman gives order on how money should be spent. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

Truly if we examine it critically, we realise that it is not in our culture. It is in the white man's culture. For example, I want to spend one thousand naira and I call my wife to inform her, she will scream that the money is too much and for me I know that the one thousand naira would not be sufficient for the task, I just intentionally mentioned one thousand naira. Civilisation has made the woman to behave in a manner that there is nothing the man can do. There is nothing we want to do now unless the woman has a hand in it, if you go ahead to do anything the woman will disrupt that thing. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

Meal preparation

Timely preparation of meal for the husband is regarded as a justifiable reason for a woman to experience intimate partner violence.

...Another reason is if the woman fails to prepare food for her husband at the right time. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

Not preparing the meal on time. (IDI with a Traditional Leader)

Monetary issues

Issues related to money also contribute to the incidence of intimate partner violence. Comparison between families by the women could lead to violence and when the man is not in the situation to provide money for the needs of his family members.

Money is essential, where the man cannot provide for the needs of the woman it could cause intimate partner violence. It is not being contented that causes the problem nowadays. When a woman begins to compare her family with another in terms of amenities and properties they have, forgetting that all fingers are not equal. And where the woman listens to advise from outside, not considering the difference in the status of their husbands (FGD with Uneducated Men)

... there are some women, who because they have some money on them and as such nothing the husband does that will satisfy her. Another issue is the care for the household, for the children, husband and general household duties but instead she is in a haste to get to where she makes money. It is the responsibility of the man to provide for the household, and when this is not possible and where the woman is arrogant and not submissive to her husband because of her financial strength could lead to problems. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

The women and the traditional leaders in Ijesaland believes that there will be less incidence of intimate partner violence incidence as the marriage duration increases. This is partly due to the belief that both the husband and wife would have come to have a better understanding of each other.

... the longer two people live together, the more they would understand each other. So, the frequency of such misunderstandings would be reducing. For the wife would no longer do what annoy her husband. And it may be that the husband at the onset of their marriage does not expect his wife to reply to the things he says, but the woman not knowing his husband would reply and would cause violence. But later she would get to know and understand her husband. (FGD with Educated Women)

...early in marriage there will be misunderstanding due to not knowing the character of each other, ... the man may need water and the woman may be slow in giving him the water. He may go out and the woman may ask him of his where about. It is just that as they mature the misunderstanding reduces. (IDI with a Traditional Leader)

The views as expressed by the participants of the FGD and the IDIs may reflect the expected scenario, but the fact remains that irrespective of length of marital duration, a woman is still susceptible to intimate partner violence.

Intimate Partner Violence Coping Strategies

There is the general belief among the Yoruba that marriage is an institution in which a woman is continuously under the tutelage of either her husband and/or her in-laws. Also, it is believed that a woman should be prepared to endure whatever hardship or pains that may come across her way because of her children. The following quotations show the understanding of the Ijesa about endurance as a coping strategy for intimate partner violence.

My advice is for her to know that the incidence of intimate partner violence will cease or stop one day. This is because she herself must avoid the things that lead to violence. You know there are different forms of violence. She should avoid the reasons for the violence. For a woman who wants to live long in her marital union she must have a lot of endurance, patience, love and long suffering. The man also should be one who loves his wife and children, and should be alive to his responsibilities. (IDI with a Teacher/Housewife)

It is believed that she should stay and take good care of the children, for if she packs away and the husband marries a new wife the new woman may not take good care of her children properly and she will not have peace of mind. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

There is no way for two people to live together no matter how they endure, they will still have misunderstanding. For if two people live at peace, they are just enduring one another. It is either the behaviour or character of the husband may not be pleasing to the wife and that of the wife may not be pleasing to the husband they all just need to endure. (FGD with Educated Women)

In enduring, patience is the keyword it is believed that when there is endurance on either party in the union, their family will not be exposed to the influence of third parties. The consensus among male and female participants in the FGDs gives the impression that the man is expected to exercise more patience than the woman.

The way they handle such is to have patience with each other. If there would be problem in case, the wife is the "hot type" the man must be patient with her but if it is otherwise the wife must be patient with him. (FGD with Educated Women)

The husband must be patient perpetually else there will always be commotion in the house. Generally, women are not as patient as men, if you say one thing they (women) reply with ten. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

It is expected that the endurance includes avoiding what upsets your spouse. In situations when mistakes are made a quick admittance of one's fault is understood as part of the endurance mechanism that is necessary for peace and tranquillity in the home. Another keyword in the endurance mechanism is love for one another. The issue would be, is there any marital union where there is no love? Another question will be what was the basis or foundation of their coming together in the first instance? It would be expected that at the point of getting married the man and the woman would confess some level of love for one another. As expressed by a participant in one of the in-depth interviews, the absence of genuine love breeds intimate partner violence.

The solution is that the couple should sit down and the man should recall that he decided to marry his wife because he loved her in the first instance. If it is the difficulties arising from in-laws, the man and his wife must have a deep reflection. The truth is that one of them must be a 'sheep' while the other is a 'goat', it is then they can leave in peace. If the two are like sheep that is peaceful then they can live together peacefully. But if the two want to behave like bosses where the man feels he is superior to the wife and the woman also wants to show that she is somebody, then they will not have peaceful relationship. But if one of them will be humble to accept the other then there will be peace. (IDI with a Teacher/Housewife)

You see if it is a wise and understanding woman who knows what she is doing and who wants progress for herself and her husband she will endure, the Bible says that it is he that endures to the end that shall be saved. But if she can endure to the point when her children mature ultimately the children would care for her. (FGD with Educated Elderly men)

The value for children by the society is the basis for endurance by a woman in a relationship where she experiences intimate partner violence. It is believed that it is wisdom for a woman to endure violence in that ultimately, she would be cared for at old age by the children.

Some of the different actions that are taking as coping strategies against intimate partner violence include the couple keeping malice with one another as depicted in the quotation below.

It is sometimes because the man wants his wife to be submissive to his parents and that whatever directives his parents issue the woman must heed such directives, because they do not understand one another and when the woman does not want to heed to such it brings problems, pains, and agonies. Such could lead to all forms of violence including physical, psychological, and verbal abuse. You see in such situation; the man would want to show his authority and the woman may also want to show that she has some power. These could lead to the couple keeping malice with one another for a while. (IDI with a Teacher/Housewife)

Some women even become indifferent to their husbands because of having endured the situation for some time.

So, she will continue to cope with the situation and after some time the woman would not bother about her husband again and such women regard themselves as becoming men for she can now cope with the problems. (IDI with a Teacher/Housewife)

While some women become indifferent, some take solace in their religious beliefs and will go about doing all that is necessary to avoid violence in their marital unions.

For others that are Christians that go to church and listen to sermons and would apply the sermons to their situations, become resolute and do not allow troubles in their union. (FGD with Educated Youths)

Separation as a coping strategy come in only when the woman might have tried enduring and she runs out of patience that she would adopt separation as a strategy.

The way to cope is that he/she must adapt, if at the end of day, she finds out she could not adapt she may be forced to pack out if the person is a woman. If it was the man, he may leave the home for the wife if the problem is getting out of hands. (FGD with Educated Youths)

The following quotation confirms the intensity of intimate partner violence in Ijesaland, if separation is the last coping strategy against intimate partner violence.

...it is as if it is highest among the Ijesas, which is why there is the saying that phenomenon of 'da le mo su' this is very high because the woman could no longer leave in her marital home, she would pack out and leave with her children either in her father's house or any other house. This is very rampant in Ijesaland, there are many women like that, and for some women they would even have stopped child bearing yet she would revert to her maiden name. This is very much in Ijesaland. (IDI with a Teacher/Housewife)

In the days of our fathers before, a woman would not easily pack out of her matrimonial home and 'ile mosu' was not this rampant then like now, it is not that I am abusing our women, if we are to take a count of women who are not living with their husbands within thirty minutes one would count about 10 just within this neighbourhood. That shows the level of divorce of marriages and there are many men who do not want to take care of their families and there are many women who do not want to persevere again. (FGD, Elderly)

Apart from enduring the relationship, recourse to prayers and resolution of the issue are part of the coping strategies adopted by women in Ijesaland. There are different types of disputes, for some there are no third-party interventions while for some, third parties will have to intervene before the issue is resolved.

In addition, there are different types of disputes between couples, for some the third party will not be aware whereas there are some in which there will be boxing but if the husband is patient there will not be problem. There are some disputes that could be resolved between the couple without any intervention (FGD with Uneducated Men)

There is nothing they will do; the husband and wife will have to resolve the crisis between them. (FGD with Educated Women)

Conflict Resolution mechanisms

Among the Ijesas in times past the common form of living is the extended family living structure. The Ijesas had their traditional mechanism for conflict resolution within the family. Then the man was not allowed to issue instruction to his wife without the consent of the head of the family (*Baale*). A man beating his wife in the presence of a parent or senior sibling is interpreted as insulting such a relation.

Yes, we have our own culture and tradition in resolving such crisis. There is the 'Baale' in the olden days people like us are not matured to marry, and even when married you cannot issue instruction to your wife without the consent of the 'Baale'. It is the command of the 'Baale' that is followed, a man cannot lift his hand to beat his wife if any of his senior siblings or father is around. It is believed that if you beat your wife in the presence of your brothers or father then it implies that you are beating them and not your wife. A similar thing holds for the wife, she will not misbehave in the presence of her husband's brothers and fathers or uncles. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

Sometimes marital conflicts are resolved out of the fear of averting a married woman living alone or going back to her father's house. This is a situation that many women abhor, in that it brings reproach not only to the woman but also to her family. This is a form of single-parent hood that is still stigmatised among the Yoruba generally and the Ijesa. Many women would do everything at settling the rift between themselves and their husbands including sending of emissaries to plead with their husbands.

...The Yoruba sees the return of a married woman to her father's house ("da le mo' su") as nothing good but a reproach to the family. In the olden days in Ijesaland, if such a thing happens to a family, it is like being bereaved, so women are also conscious of not being sent back to their father's house. If it is getting to such, she will send emissaries to plead with her husband or pleads herself. The husband has a upper hand for if she is sent packing, the man would marry another wife. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

In resolving the issue either the husband or the wife will have to call the other partner and mention the faults committed against each other. What is paramount being that one person (either the husband or the wife) will have to take the initiative to call the other for the issue to be resolved. Patience is a virtue that will be required even for the issue to be resolved.

Irrespective of how long a couple has stayed together it may be 5 or 10 years, there are times when they will have misunderstanding for they have different. In some instances; especially when there are no parent-in-law and there ensues fight, the husband may after some time call the wife for them to talk about the issue and he will warn the wife not to repeat the same behaviour and by that the whole crisis is resolved. It may also be the wife that will call her husband that "my dear" what you did yesterday was quite painful to me but let us forget it all. Yes, with patience all will be resolved; the reality is that one person will have to take the initiative to resolve the matter. (FGD with Educated Women)

...For a man if there is quarrel between himself and his wife and they discuss the issue between one another and the man knows he is at fault, he may use boldface and if you are patient the woman will yet plead with her husband. And even when it is the woman that is at fault and the man is patient and you ask her if what she has done is good, she will eventually apologise. If a man stands on the point that he is the person in charge, the executive president of the home, disputes will not be easily resolved, but if there is love between the man and the wife, it will not be so. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

As expressed in the quotation above, even when the man was at fault and he exercise some patience the wife would still plead with him for peace to reign in the union. Sex is a means by which some couples resolve their differences, either there was an intervention by a third party or not. This could be a two-way effect on the marital union, because if one party decides to use sex as a weapon against the partner (especially the woman denying her husband advances) the incidence of intimate partner violence may be exacerbated. On the other hand, when both parties satisfy each other sexually it may lead to a reduction in the incidence of intimate partner violence or enhance quick resolution of conflicts when such arises. It is believed that in some situations the issue would not have been fully resolved till the couples have sexual intercourse, thus buttressing the fact that sex could be a form of therapy in ensuring peace in marital unions.

There are some that will settle within each other, for such people they will call each other and mention what the other party has done that was offensive. ...It may be later in the night, it will be when everything might have died down, and they will call each other and resolve the issues. Thereafter they would have sex. (FGD with Educated Youths)

Yes, some resolve their fight/misunderstanding with sex. (FGD with Educated Women)

...once the elders attempt to settle, the entire rift will be settled on their mats. When they come close to each other they will fully resolve the cases, and thereafter they will burst out in laughter and that will be the end of the case. (FGD with Elderly men)

In the issue being resolved by a third party, the results from the qualitative data show that irrespective of the offence of the party that is found guilty, separation of the couples is never an option that is considered. This is because it is expected that the woman should be able to endure whatever form of hardship she is faced with in her matrimonial home. There are no sanctions or punishment imposed during resolving the violence, unless the issue is resolved in a court room.

You see, no one can advise a woman to pack out of her matrimonial home once she has children for the union, if she leaves, she may not be sure of what the situation would be if she marries another man. We will not advise of divorce or separation, it is the man we will talk to, we will find out the cause(s) of their quarrel always, if it is the woman that is at fault she will be counselled especially if the woman is involved with extra-marital relationship and they fight regularly with the husband keeping quiet later, people would ask her why, that she should be careful and should think of her children, she would never be advised to pack out of her matrimonial home. If the husband is at fault, he will be talked to and if the woman she would be talked to. (IDI with a Traditional Leader)

When it is not a court, if taken to court, they could be punished, but there cannot be quarrel between husband and wife and the husband be punished or the wife, it is settlement, but if it is a serious matter then they go to court. If it is a situation between husband and wife it is resolving the issue that is essential. (IDI with a Traditional Leader)

In some situations, the woman would seek the intervention of her parent-in-law for the issue to be resolved. For others it is the elderly people or friends that are within the vicinity that is called. Once the elders intervene they will counsel both parties, for such a situation not to repeat itself.

Some pack out of the home to their father-in-law for the matter to be settled, others resolve the matter at home. It is the woman that leaves often, for it is the woman that the man beats. She is the person who reports. (FGD with Educated Women)

Yes, there are the elderly in the household they will be called to intervene. If now we are fighting, our children will go to get the attention of close family friend. Then such a friend will come and enquire on the cause for the fight. As for me I get angrier when I know the attention of my friend has been sought, I will like to achieve my mission and indeed I become more forceful because I would want the man to intervene more quickly when next his attention is sought for he will know that I am a wicked person, so he will come quickly. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

People can settle it for them by lecturing both parties. Another thing entirely is that whoever is stubborn should be counselled thoroughly. The elders on the street who will talk to him seriously, and if it was the wife, they may go to the parents, their landlords/land lady or their tenants could help them. (FGD with Educated Youths)

The wife could go to her in-laws or even a close friend that the husband listens to. And if it is the husband, he would have before then identified somebody that the wife holds in high regards that she listens to, either her boss or somebody in her family or any one that the wife respects, then that person would first listen to both parties

individually before calling the two of them together before settling the issue. (IDI with a Teacher/Housewife)

If there is violence between couples like before, they would call on the elders in the neighbourhood and such elders would ask for the cause of the violence from both parties and whoever was at fault would be apportioned blame. You see the matter may not be totally resolved at that point in time, one of the man or the wife may still have some bitterness. If they are good Christians they would take such matters to their church, their pastor may come and resolve the issue this is what happens nowadays. (FGD with Elderly men)

To resolve conflict sometimes takes some days they will talk to the man for him to realize the fact that he cheated the woman. This the elders will do until he realizes same and if it is the woman that is at fault, they will allow the dousing of the tension for a while before talking to the woman. For some it will be early morning talk and she will be made to apologise to her husband. (FGD with Uneducated Men)

If it is not fight to finish/divorce, she should report to the traditional leader for the case to be resolved or it may be the husband, so she should just report. The people she should report to include her father-in-law, if such a person is available where they are living or a traditional leader. (IDI with a Traditional Leader)

Sometimes the women report to religious clerics for the issue to be resolved.

For some women if there is trouble they go to a good friend of their husband who can be involved in the issue of their family, and for some they go to tell their Reverend or Pastor who will come in and resolve the issue. (FGD with Educated Women)

They may talk to their pastor. (FGD with Educated Youths)

Irrespective of the situation it is believed that women who experience intimate partner violence in Ijesaland should not report the incidence to the law enforcing authorities. There is a proverb which states that “*a ki ti kootu de se ore*” that is, chords of friendship are cut once there is litigation against the other in a court of law. As such wives are not expected to report their husbands to the police. When she does, she is seen to have gone against the norms, and in some instances the case may even be turned against her by the husband if the man is influential.

No, the woman should not report such incidences to the police, she is not supposed to report to the police when she has her in-laws, but she may report to traditional leaders, the traditional leader is better than the police. (IDI with a Teacher/Housewife)

You see any woman that goes to report to the police has gone beyond her bars, that is, beyond the norms. If the man is a popular man once the police comes he would ask that the woman be locked up, after some time he will come back to bail him. I remember when my sister-in-law took my brother to the police, my brother asked the police to lock her up. She was only bailed after the third day. After that she promised never to report any case to the police again. (FGD with Elderly men)

If she reports to the police that means she has handed over the matter to the government, and there are various crimes, and the Ijesa believe that you do not take each other to court and come back and still be friends, it is against the beliefs of Ijesa.

They would not expect to continue the friendship if the matter is taken to the police. But the woman could report the case to the traditional leader, for if the matter was reported to the police the man would be treated as a criminal. (IDI with a Teacher/Housewife)

CONCLUSION

This paper examined the correlates and the coping strategies for intimate partner violence adopted by women in Ijesa land. Though the results of this paper cannot be generalised due to the qualitative data adopted for the study.

Physical, verbal/psychological, and sexual violence are types of intimate partner violence that women in Ijesaland experience. Irrespective of type of marital union women are susceptible to intimate partner violence. Though, educated women believed any man that perpetrates physical violence against his wife is not educated even when such a person has educational qualifications.

There are individual, couple, and community related correlates of intimate partner violence. The individual related correlates of intimate partner violence include immaturity, use of alcohol, disposition to monetary issues, witnessing of intergenerational violence and knowledge of extramarital affairs of spouse. The couple related correlates of intimate partner violence include childlessness, issues of child care, issues of sexual intercourse and the living arrangements of the couple. Issues of gender role expectations are community based. Nevertheless, they are all not mutually exclusive, for expecting that child care should be more on the part of the women is an indication of the gender power play that still exists among the Ijesa. There are no problems when the man is failing in his responsibilities towards the care of the children, for ideally child care should be a joint responsibility of the couple.

The coping strategies adopted by victims of intimate partner violence among the Ijesa include endurance, being indifferent, praying, making moves to resolve the issues and separation. The resolution mechanisms that are adopted include invitation of a third party to intervene, some of the third-party agents will include parents/parent-in-laws; friends, neighbours, and religious clerics. Most often the agents invited to intervene are those that one of both couples have regard and respect for. Sometimes the fear of the woman not wanting to move back to living with her parents lead to resolution. The phenomenon is regarded as “*da le mo’ su*”, which could be regarded as a typology of single-parenthood. The least accepted mechanism for resolving intimate partner violence is reporting to the law enforcement agencies. This is still partly due to the belief that issues of intimate partner violence is in the private domain and should be so treated even at the expense of the health and emotional consequences on the woman.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is the need to have social development programmes to teach young individuals social skills, anger management and conflict resolution, to prevent violence later in life. This should be targeted at changing the beliefs and behaviours of individuals. Young men and women should be encouraged to pursue education to the tertiary levels, this is with the intent of ensuring that more people get into the marriage institution being more matured because of delay in marriage due to the education pursuit. At the couple level, there should be programmes by the Social Works department of the various local governments on effective communication skills. Interventions to encourage better parenting practices would be valuable in that less children would be exposed to incidence of intimate partner violence while growing-up. At the community level efforts should be geared towards raising public awareness

about intimate partner violence and the consequences. This could include media campaigns to target entire communities or educational campaigns for settings such as schools, workplaces, and other institutions. Religious and traditional leaders must be targeted in the campaigns to change the norms as it affects gender expectations and power play. This will be a long-term intervention that should involve all stakeholders including the civil society.

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