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Family Violence and Sibling Abuse in Nigeria Families

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Abstract: The study investigated family violence and sibling abuse in Nigerian families. This is based on the observation that there is an increasing instance of violence in Nigerian families. Relevant literatures were reviewed for the study. Two research hypotheses were developed for the study. The population used for the study were all families in Abraka in Delta state. Samples of 380 respondents were randomly selected for the study which comprised of staff and students of Delta state university community in Abraka and students of primary and secondary schools in Abraka community. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled Family Violence and Siblings Abuse. The 44 item instrument has a coefficient of r = 0.75 to analyse the data collected for the study, the t-test and multiple regression statistics was used. The analysis of data revealed that family types do not affect experiences of sibling abuse. This is because children from monogamous and polygamous homes do not differ in their experiences of sibling abuse. Analysis of data also revealed that siblings' abuse is real to Nigerian families. This is a phenomenon which has eaten deep into the family system in the country. It was therefore suggested that there should be some of awareness campaign that will help to change this menace in Nigerian families. The study therefore, recommends that structures should be put on ground to check this ugly phenomenon that is gradually destroying the personalities of young children. This can be done through effective counselling for family members, rehabilitation for abusive parents and penalty to be imposed on anyone who indulges in this behaviour.

Key words: Family, sibling, violence, abuse, penalty, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Family is haven where joy, calm, peace and succour are provided. Several scholars including Okobia (2008), Action Health (2003) and Gelles (1974) defined it as microcosm a social unit, bed-rock of the society, an arena that provides for intimacy, love, tendencies, sharing, happiness, socialization of children, security, economic cooperation, meeting physiological and psychological needs for her members (husband, wife, children either by birth or adoption). It is also characterized by all kinds of positive and negative experiences including violence.

Violence is a purposeful pattern of actions (physical, psychological, sexual and emotional) carried out over a period of time with the aim of controlling the victim (Rygwelski, 1995; Okobia, 2008). Family violence is any intentional abuse by a family member to cause hurt, pain or injury (Gurshick, 2002; Kembe, 2008). Family violence can be defined as any act (physical, psychosocial, sexual and emotional) put up any family member whose intention is to cause pain, damage or injury his/her victim. This is a growing global problem that is widely reported in many parts of the world including America, China and Pakistan. The practice cuts across nations, races, religions, culture, socio-economic status and age among other variables. Just as the wider society is experiencing the hydra-headed monster, the basic unit that is the family is also experiencing her share of the monster.

Studies have shown (Okobia, 2008; Kembe, 2008; Onuoha, 2008) that many families are battle ground where victims are abused. The victims include father, mother, children and siblings. The result of the violence include physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to the victim including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life. Most traditional African families are polygamous in nature and have what researchers call blended families structure. Blended family in this study is a family where original husband of the woman dies and she is inherited by another member in the man's family and children are raised through this relationship. Polygamous families are where the husband marries more one wife and he is living with the wives and their children on the other hand monogamous family is made up of husband and wife with the children living together.

In families, children have different characteristics and potentials which are manifested in intelligence, physical attractiveness and athletic ability among others. Each child seeks to monopolize their parents' time, attention and approval. When these desires are not met appropriately this can lead to bitterness and aggression among the children. This could result in sibling rivalry. Sibling rivalry can be fuelled by lack of reasonable system of justice in the home. When for example a law breaker is condone or if apprehended is set free without standing

trial this passes the message of favourtism to other sibling. This act deepens mutual antagonism among the children and acts create great jealousy and unhealthy competition which results to sibling abuse either by favoured child to his/her sibling and vice versa. Sibling abuse practice is universal and a serious public health and psychological problem. Sibling abuse is wilful attempt by a sibling to hurt the other sibling through verbal, sexual, psychological and psychosocial means. The effect of sibling abuse is devastating on the victims' physical, mental and psychological health. The psychological effect it has on her victim is manifested in low-self esteem, inferiority complex or superiority complex, etc. Abuses of individuals have been recognized internationally as a serious obstacle to development, peace and violation of human right. Moywaye-Famgbe and Idowu (1997) explained that violence against individual effect the victim's relationship with her/him environment or in their daily social functioning and impairs their psychological homeostasis. Researches are mostly on spouse abuse and children abuse. There are little report on abuse the aim of this study is to examine the extent of the prevalence of sibling abuse in the cultural setting. Unfortunately, the cultural setting accepts the devastating practice as normal so reporting the case is seen as breaking traditional norms.

Statement of the problem: There is no gainsaying that sibling abuse is prevalent in the cultural setting particularly in polygamous and blended families where sibling rivalry is glaring. The acts of violence may be physical emotional, verbal, psychological even spiritual. There is a dearth in literature on this type of abuse and virtually everything about the effects of this abuse has remained documented, the problem of the study is to determine prevalence of the sibling abuse, the forms and determine whether there is difference in sibling abuse based on family type. To guide the study, the following research questions are asked:

- Is there any significant difference in family violence between children from monogamous and any other form of polygamous family?
- Is there any significant relationship between the dimensions of sibling abuse and family violence?
- What is difference in forms of siblings abuse (psycho social, physical, emotional, sexual) between monogamous and polygamous families

Research hypotheses:

- There is no significant difference in family violence between children from monogamous and polygamous family
- There is no significant relationship between forms of sibling abuse and domestic violence
- There is no significant difference in forms of siblings abuse (psycho-social, physical, emotional, sexual) between monogamous and polygamous families

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The design of the study is survey. The target population is all families in Abraka P.O. in Delta state. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to select the sample size of 380 respondents.

The research instrument used in this study is titled Family Violence and Sibling Abuse. The instrument was divided into two parts. Part one sought relevant demographic information on gender, age, type of family. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of 44 items. The instrument was designed such that the participants could respond to the items on a 4 point scale format of Very Often (VO), Often (O), Rare ® and Very Rare (VR) as well as Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). It measures six sub-parts of family violence and sibling abuse: psycho-social abuse, 10 items; physical abuse, 6 items; emotional abuse, 8 items; sexual abuse, 6 items; family violence, 6 items and consequences, 8 items; totalling 44 items. The instrument had face and content validity. The reliability of the instrument was established using Crombach alpha. The following coefficient alpha (0.05 level) were obtained. Physical abuse: $r = 0.64$ ($p<0.05$), psycho-social abuse: $r = 0.65$ ($p<0.05$), emotional abuse: $r = 0.61$ ($p<0.05$), sexual abuse: $r = 0.71$ ($p<0.05$), family consistency of the instrument was reliable. The whole instrument had $r = 0.75$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- What is the difference in family violence between members of monogamous and polygamous families?
- There is no significant difference in family violence between monogamous and polygamous families

There is mean difference between monogamous and polygamous families on their experiences of family is 0.05. This shows that monogamous families experience violence than their polygamous counterpart though not significant with the sample studied. The observed t-value is 0.099 and the critical t-value is 0.921. Since, the observed t-value is less than the critical t-value, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that the respondent from monogamous and polygamous families do not differ in their experience of family violence (Table 1).

Table 2 shows that the 4 dimensions of sibling abuse (psycho social, physical, emotional and sexual) predict family violence. It yields a co-efficient of multiple

Table 1: Mean difference in family violence between children from monogamous and polygamous families

Variables	N	X	SD	t. cal	t. crit	Mean difference	Decision	Sign. level
Monogamous	207	14.29	4.973	0.099	0.921	0.53	Accepted	Not significant
Polygamous	173	14.24	5.427	-	-	-	-	-

Table 2: Relationship between dimension of sibling abuse and family violence

ANOVA

Source of variation	Df	SS	Ms	F-ratio
Due to regression	4	3125.788	781.43	41.658
Due to residue	374	7034.430	18.76	-
Total	379	10160.160	-	-

Multiple R (adjusted) = 0.555; R^2 = 0.308; R (adjusted) = 0.300; Standard Error = 4.331

Table 3: Relative contribution of the independent variables t the prediction

Variables	Standard regression (B)	SeB	Beta	T-ratio	p-value	Sign
Constant	5.083	0.958	-	-	-	-
Psycho-social abuse	0.465	0.060	0.393	7.807	0.000	000
Physical abuse	0.357	0.078	0.231	4.585	0.000	000
Emotional abuse	0.046	0.058	0.037	0.814	0.416	NS
Sexual abuse	-0.024	0.072	-0.015	-0.326	-0.326	NS

Table 4: Family type differences in physical, emotional, sexual and psycho-social dimensions of sibling abuse in Abraka community

Sibling abuse	Type of family	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	Sig.	Mean difference	Decision
Psycho-social	Monogamous	207	12.21	4.356	378	1.127	0.260	0.507	NS
	Polygamous	173	11.71	-4.385	-	-	-	-	-
Sexual	Monogamous	207	7.62	3.695	-	1.964	0.050	0.053	S
	Polygamous	173	6.97	2.556	-	-	-	-	-
Physical	Monogamous	207	9.41	3.444	-	2.034	0.043	0.700	S
	Polygamous	173	8.71	3.208	-	-	-	-	-
Emotional	Monogamous	207	12.25	4.379	-	2.823	0.005	-	S
	Polygamous	173	11.04	3.857	-	-	-	-	-

regression (R) of 0.555 and multiple Regression square (R^2) of 0.300. It accounts for 30% of the variance in family violence. The Table 2 also shows that analysis of the multiple regression data yield an F-ratio of 41.658 (significant at the 0.05 level).

Table 3 shows for each independent error variable, the standardized regression weight (B), the Standard error of estimate (SeB), the Degree of freedom, (Df), the T ratio and the level at which the T-ratio is significant. Table 3 shows the T-ratio associated with only two variables psycho-social, physical abuse are significant at 0.05 while that for sexual and emotional were not significant.

The Table 4 shows that they were significant differences in physical, emotional, sexual and psycho social dimensions of sibling abuse between monogamous and polygamous siblings in families studied in Abraka community of Delta state. Though there was a mean difference of 0.26 found in psycho-social dimensions of sibling abuse but was not significant.

The result shows that the different dimensions of sibling abuse when taken together effectively predicted family violence. Family violence is a complex and multi-hydra headed monster that have eaten into family life, her victims are caged in cocoon pleading to be rescued. The presence of this monster in families, cut's across all races, social class, religion and age. This implies that the presence of this dimension of sibling abuse is an indication of family violence. Family violence therefore has a significant bearing on the sibling abusing themselves. The findings here agree with the earlier studies of Okobia (2008). The above researcher's findings reveal that the presence of any form of abuse is an indication of the family being a battle field.

Difference in type of family structure: This finding is at variance from personal experiences but the plausible reason for the is finding is that the families irrespective family structure experience violence particularly because of cultural permissiveness and cultural stereotyping that allows males total control and abuse members of the family. The findings from hypothesis two reveal that there is a significant difference in physical, emotional and sexual dimensions of sibling abuse based on family type (monogamous and polygamous). The mean differences psycho-social dimensions of sibling abuse were not significant. The plausible reasons for this finding in the cultural setting is that such behaviours like humiliating, controlling, doing what will make the victim feel diminished or embarrassed. All these irrational behaviours are seen as ways of correcting and curtailing the excesses of the abused. This is the reason why there is no significant difference based on family type.

The mean scores of monogamous and polygamous abused siblings were 7.62 and 6.97, respectively in sexual dimension. The implication is that monogamous siblings,

experience higher level of sexual abuse than their counterparts in polygamous family. The reason being that children from polygamous families are suspicious of one another so do not come into intimate relationship with one another. Culturally children from polygamous families are indoctrinated to the level of seeing their step siblings as their enemies and competitors by their mothers.

The mean scores of monogamous and polygamous abused siblings were 9.41 and 8.71, respectively in physical dimension. This shows that monogamous siblings experience higher level of physical abuse than their polygamous counterpart. The reason for this finding is that polygamous families most times envy, avoid and suspect each other unlike while in monogamous families from the cultural perspective, physical abuse such as beating are approved by parents particularly where the elderly siblings are inflicting harm on the younger sibling under the cover of correcting the abused.

There is a significant difference in the mean scores of monogamous and polygamous abused siblings with the mean scores of 12.25 and 11.04, respectively in emotional dimension. The reason for the finding is that when somebody you consider as your own, tongue lashes you or openly disrespects you; the pain is more than when an enemy dishonours you. You see the latter as a mad man's talk and so it does not hurt you.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the findings of this study is that family violence and sibling abuse is real in the lives of the respondent used in the study irrespective of the family type. Its forms range from physical, economic, emotional and verbal to physiological. It defies a mono-casual logic. Many of its effects are visible; nonetheless, it has serious effects on its victims, the society and the nation at large. These effects range from mental and medical effects, loss of working hours/days, loss of school days, loss of house-work, in addition there are acute pains and suffering including loss of quality life, loss of affection and even death. For criminals whose acts are products of their social background due to domestic violence which more of than not include sibling abuse; the totality of impact of their acts on national development is enormous though on the negative side. It is interesting to know that any existing human problem has an existing human solution therefore holistic approach such as formal and informal theories of management are useful in averting the violent trends in families in particular and the nation in general.

IMPLICATIONS

Some implications for counselling practice drawn from this study include the following: the first one is that counsellors need to research and find out how to handle issues of siblings' abuse in the home and the school environment. Secondly, counsellors should also develop strategies to assist abusive parents and children in counselling relationship.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made for the study:

- Counselling centres within the schools should be mad more functional, this will help in preparing the centre for the treatment of abused children
- Students should be made to believe and trust the counselling process. This can be done through orientation programmes and seminars
- Counselling centres should be developed in the communities that will take care of abusive parents and older siblings who are no longer in school

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