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THE IMPACTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN IGBO CHRISTIAN HOMES: A SOCIO-RELIGIOUS INVESTIGATION IN CENTRAL SUB- CULTURAL ZONE OF IGBO LAND

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ABSTRACT

Over the years, scholars as well as researchers have so much concentrated on the issue of domestic violence with special focus on the women. This in itself is quite good and not out of place. However, the truth remains that it is not the women who suffer when relationships between husbands and wives become violent even amongst Christian homes in Igbo land. It is apparent and undeniable that when domestic violent prevails in a home, virtually everyone bears the effect, from the couple to their children/ wards, irrespective of who is the oppressor or the oppressed. This work takes a holistic look at the Christian families in the Central Sub-Cultural Zone of Igbo land that are challenged by domestic violence. The study aims to examine the types of domestic violence in Igbo Christian homes and proffer solutions to the problem. This work will be useful to the government, churches, families, counsellors, students and future researchers. Both primary and secondary sources of data collection were employed. The descriptive and area cultural method of analyses were used. Findings from the study revealed that victims often face significant obstacles in seeking help, such as societal stigma, fear of retribution and inadequate support systems. The study recommends among others that efforts should be made to challenge and change the patriarchal norms that contribute to domestic violence.

Keywords: Christian Homes, Cultural Zone, Domestic violence, Igboland Impacts, Investigation, Socio-Religious

Introduction

According to Nwaezuoke, (2025), Domestic Violence is a serious social problem that needs urgent attention as it affects the social wellbeing of the locality directly or indirectly. The effects on children cannot be over emphasized and also needs exigent attention as children are the leaders of tomorrow"(P.85).

Marriage, instituted by God, is a sacred union between a man and woman meant to be fruitful (Gen. 1:28). This bond significantly impacts not only the couple but also their children, making it essential to maintain its integrity. Unfortunately, domestic violence can arise within marriages, causing profound effects on families and communities. The institution of marriage spans diverse cultural customs, but its essence remains similar across societies. In Igbo Christian homes, a blend of rich traditional practices and Christian values shapes family dynamics. While Christianity fosters ideals of compassion and support, it sometimes intersects awkwardly with entrenched

patriarchal norms that can enable domestic violence.

Despite the promotion of love and respect by Christian teachings, instances of domestic violence persist. Traditional gender roles traditionally assign authority to men, which can lead to abusive behavior on women being justified through cultural perspectives.

According to Nwaezuoke,(2025)asserts that many women and young girls in Onitsha North L.G.A, interviewed reveals that 80% of women have experienced violations like financial control, isolation, insults, intimidation, and physical assault. Recent patterns show an increase in physical aggression, alongside rising issues of sexual harassment, trafficking, and harmful cultural practices. Domestic violence is a pervasive yet often unrecognized human rights violation in Onitsha, reflecting a culture that accepts such abuse as normal. This silence enables enduring male dominance and neglects women's rights, further exacerbating their struggles amidst economic hardship, discrimination, and emotional trauma.

Also, there are notable incidents, such as the tragic death of Ogochukwu Uwadiegwu at the hands of her husband over a loaf of bread, illustrate how domestic strife can escalate into lethal violence. Masculine authority can prompt men, including educated and affluent ones, to use violence as a means to assert dominance.

Moreover, domestic violence isn't confined to traditional arrangements; women can also be perpetrators, as evidenced by incidents reported in Igbo communities. The cycle of violence remains hidden, due to societal stigma that prevents victims from seeking help. Addressing the issue of domestic violence in Igbo Christian homes is crucial for the preservation of family integrity and societal well-being. The research aims to explore these issues comprehensively and propose effective solutions to mitigate domestic violence in this context.

Methodology

This refers to the systematic and scientific approach used to conduct research, investigate problems, and gather data and information for a specific purpose. It involves techniques and procedures to identify, collect, analyse and interpret data, answering research questions or solving research problems. The researcher used both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary sources are oral interviews and personal observations. The secondary sources are materials from previous works by both foreign and indigenous scholars that wrote on the relevant issues about the subject matter. The materials used include main line books, journals, conference papers, researched theses and dissertations from different libraries, internet materials, newspapers, and magazine articles. The descriptive and area-culture methods of analyses will be used for data analyses. The reason for the descriptive method is to interpret the experiences of people or what people think about the impacts of domestic violence in Igbo Christian homes and how to control it. Also, the area-culture method is focused on understanding the cultural practices, social structures, and behaviours within a geographical region or community. These methods approaches will allow a quality exploration

Conceptual framework

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence refers to a pattern of abusive behaviour occurring within intimate relationships, where one partner seeks to exert power and control over the other through various forms of physical, emotional, psychological, or sexual abuse (Iwejuo, 2016). This social issue affects individuals across different ages, genders, socio-economic backgrounds, and cultural groups. The consequences of domestic violence are severe and can have long-lasting impacts on the survivors and their families. According to Garcia-Moreno (2018), domestic violence refers to any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. This emphasizes the gendered nature of domestic violence and recognizes its various forms and consequences. Dixon, Hamilton, and Browne (2019) noted that abusive behaviour promotes a systematic pattern of power control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. Kaur and Garg (2020) describe domestic violence as the deliberate act of using power and control tactics by one intimate partner over the other, leading to physical, sexual, emotional, or economic harm. According to Krug (2015), Domestic violence refers to interpersonal violence which takes place in domestic settings, family relationships and intimate relationships. It is also known as family violence or spousal abuse. Any one (men or women) can become a domestic violence offender or victim. Domestic violence is destructive behaviour in an intimate relationship where one person tries to dominate and control the other in a dating or marital relationship or in cohabitation, which causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in that relationship. It includes acts of physical aggression like slapping, hitting, kicking or beating, psychological abuse such as intimidation, constant belittling or humiliation, forces sexual intercourse or any other controlling behaviour like isolating a person from family and friends, monitoring their movements and restricting access to information or assistance. The factors contributing to domestic violence are multifaceted. Numerous studies have identified risk factors such as a history of violence, substance abuse, mental health issues, and socioeconomic disparities. Additionally, cultural and social norms that perpetuate gender inequalities and condone violence can also contribute to the prevalence of domestic violence (Heise, 2019). Domestic violence has severe consequences for survivors and their children. Evans et al., (2021) explained that victims often suffer physical injuries, emotional trauma, and long-term mental health issues. The impact on children exposed to domestic violence can be particularly detrimental, leading to a range of negative outcomes such as behavioural problems, developmental delays, and increased risk of becoming victims or perpetrators themselves. Efforts to address domestic violence have focused on prevention, intervention, and support for survivors. Numerous organizations and government agencies have developed programmes and services to raise awareness, provide resources, and advocate for policy changes. For example, hotlines, shelters, and counselling services offer immediate

assistance to victims seeking safety and support. Additionally, community-based initiatives, such as education campaigns and bystander intervention programmes, aim to prevent domestic violence by challenging societal norms that perpetuate it (Casey et al., 2021)

Theoretical Explanation

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory, proposed by Albert Bandura (1960), is a psychological theory that emphasizes the importance of observational learning, imitation, and cognitive processes in shaping human behaviour. Bandura developed this theory as an extension of behaviourism, recognizing that individuals learn not only through direct experiences but also by observing and imitating others.At the core of Social Learning Theory is the notion that people learn by observing the behaviours, attitudes, and outcomes experienced by others. Bandura highlighted the role of modelling in the learning process, suggesting that individuals can acquire new behaviours and knowledge by observing and imitating role models in their social environment. This process is known as observational learning or vicarious learning. According to Bandura, observational learning involves four key processes.

Firstly, individuals must pay attention to the model's behaviour and the consequences associated with it. Attention is influenced by factors such as the model's attractiveness, relevance, and perceived competence.

Secondly, individuals need to retain the observed behaviour in memory to reproduce it later. This process involves cognitive processes such as encoding, storage, and retrieval.

Thirdly, individuals must be capable of reproducing the observed behaviour. This process requires the individual to possess the necessary physical and cognitive skills to imitate the behaviour accurately. Lastly, individuals are more likely to imitate a behaviour if they expect positive outcomes or rewards from doing so.

Motivation can be influenced by factors such as reinforcement, punishment, and the individual's own expectations of the outcome. Social Learning Theory also recognizes the role of cognitive processes in behaviour change. Bandura highlighted the importance of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully execute a particular behaviour or task. Self-efficacy plays a crucial role in determining whether individuals will engage in behaviours they have observed. Furthermore, Bandura emphasized that learning does not occur in isolation but within a social context. He argued that individuals are not passive recipients of influences from their environment but actively engage in reciprocal interactions with it. This perspective highlights the bi-directional relationship between individuals and their social environment, where individuals can shape and be shaped by their surroundings. Bandura's Social Learning Theory has significant implications for various areas, including education, psychology, and even the understanding of social issues such as aggression, violence, and the acquisition of moral values. It underscores the importance

of positive role models, the media's influence, and the power of socialization processes in shaping behaviour. Overall, Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura provides a valuable framework for understanding how people learn, acquire new behaviours, and are influenced by their social environment. It emphasizes the role of observation, imitation, cognitive processes, and the social context in shaping behaviour, offering insights into various aspects of human behaviour and socialization.

The application of Social Learning Theory to the "Impact of domestic violence in Igbo Christian Homes: a socio-religious investigation" sheds light on the dynamics and consequences of domestic violence within this specific cultural and religious context. Observational learning, a central component of Social Learning Theory, suggests that individuals acquire behaviours by observing and imitating others. In the case of domestic violence in Igbo Christian homes, children growing up in such environments may witness violent behaviours between their parents or family members. As they observe these behaviours, they may internalize and reproduce them in their own relationships later in life. This perpetuates the cycle of violence within the community and has detrimental effects on both the individuals directly involved and the wider society.

The Igbo Traditional Family Formation, Solidarity and Domestic Violence

In Igbo land, a family includes a man, his wife/wives, children and any other person that shares any form of consanguinity and affinity with the persons mentioned above. The idea of the family extends beyond immediate relatives and encompasses the extended family which includes a network of aunts, uncles, cousins, and other close kin. This emphasis on extended family ties strengthens social bonds and fosters a sense of belonging and support within the larger Igbo community. According to Ogbalu (2006), the notion of family in Igbo society is distinct from the concept of family in the Western view. This is because; while the notion of family in the Igbo African society has to do with the husband, his wife or wives, and children including other relations like in-laws, uncles, cousins, nephews, maids and servants; the Western culture does not very much accommodate these extensions. Family tends to be more of just the man, the wife the children and in-laws. In the traditional Igbo family, roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and each member has specific duties based on age and gender. Adibe (2017) explained that elders are respected for their wisdom and experience and the play a significant role in decision-making and conflict resolution within the family. The eldest male, known as the okpala, is often considered the head of the family and holds a position of authority and responsibility. Respect for elders and the acknowledgement of their guidance are integral to maintaining harmony and order within the family unit.

The ideal Igbo family is characterized by a strong sense of communal living and mutual assistance. Family members often live together in compounds, sharing resources and responsibilities. This interdependence fosters a close-knit and supportive environment where individuals rely on each other for emotional, financial, and practical support (Obi, 2020). Moreover, the extended

family system ensures that the welfare of every member is collectively considered and addressed, promoting a sense of security and belonging. Marriage, as a vital institution within the Igbo family, plays a significant role in shaping the dynamics of the household. The traditional perspective on marriage, characterized by elaborate customs and rituals, aims at fostering unity between two families and ensure the continuity of lineage and cultural practices (Okoroafor, 2020). The birth of children is highly valued, as it not only signifies the fulfilment of individual aspirations but also guarantees the continuation of the family name and ancestral ties. In the traditional Igbo family, education and cultural transmission are highly valued.

Elders play a crucial role in imparting cultural knowledge, values, and traditions to the younger generation (Okafor, 2021). This intergenerational transfer of knowledge ensures the preservation of Igbo customs and heritage and strengthens the cultural identity of the community (Eze, 2018). Additionally, the family unit is responsible for teaching essential life skills and instilling moral values in children to prepare them for responsible adulthood. Religion and spirituality are integral aspects of the Igbo family. Traditional religious beliefs and practices play a significant role in shaping the family's worldview and guiding their daily lives (Egwu, 2021). Ancestral veneration, in particular, is a prominent aspect of Igbo spirituality, and family members often seek the blessings and protection of their ancestors (Ezeani, 2014).

In recent times, the spread of Christianity has also influenced the spiritual beliefs and practices of some Igbo families (Ezeh, 2017). Nonetheless, efforts are made to preserve aspects of traditional spirituality while embracing new religious influences. As with other cultural aspects, the Igbo traditional perspective on the family has faced challenges in the face of globalization and modernization. Urbanization, migration, and changing societal norms have led to shifts in family structures and dynamics (Onwuka, 2021). While many families continue to uphold traditional values and practices, some aspects of the traditional family system have evolved to accommodate contemporary lifestyles (Nwoga, 2019). Despite these changes, the essence of the Igbo family, built on communal living, respect for elders, and the preservation of cultural identity, remain at the core of their societal fabric.

Efforts to promote and uphold these cherished traditions contribute to the resilience and continued relevance of the Igbo traditional perspective on the family in the 21st century. Amidst the challenges posed by modernization, efforts to preserve and promote the Igbo traditional perspective on the family have taken on renewed importance. Cultural organizations, community leaders, and scholars are actively involved in educating younger generations about the significance of family values and the customs that have been handed down generations. These initiatives aim to instil a sense of pride and appreciation for the traditional family structure and foster a strong connection to their cultural heritage. Additionally, the extended family system remains an essential support network for many Igbo families, especially in times of celebration or hardship (Anyacho, 2019). Collective contributions

and efforts within the extended family ensure that individuals do not face challenges alone, promoting a sense of security and belonging. This communal approach to family life continues to be a source of strength and resilience for the Igbo community, even in the face of changing social

Lessons from storytelling traditions serve to teach moral values and inspire a sense of pride in one's heritage, connecting the present with the past and strengthening cultural identity and continuity (Ezeaku, 2016). In the Igbo community, this outlook fosters strong intergenerational relationships, where respect for elders is paramount. As noted by Ogbukagu (2020), children are expected to care for their aging parents and grandparents, creating a reciprocal bond that nurtures responsibility and unity within families.

Decision-making in Igbo families reflects a communal ethos, as significant matters, such as marriages and land issues, typically involve the extended family and community elders (Anyanwu, 2017). This practice ensures that choices benefit the broader family unit. As modern challenges emerge, the Igbo community seeks to adapt while upholding core values, such as hospitality, respect for elders, spirituality, and industriousness. Consequently, traditional family values remain a wellspring of pride and identity, coexisting with contemporary lifestyles.

However, domestic violence is a pressing concern, affecting the Igbo Nation among other communities globally. Although data on domestic violence in specific regions may be limited, its prevalence in Nigeria, including within the Igbo community, has been documented (Uzodike, 2015). Such violence can take many forms—physical, emotional, and economic—impacting individuals and families across different socio-economic backgrounds. Traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms can exacerbate the issue of domestic violence; deep-seated cultural beliefs may perpetuate an environment that tolerates or normalizes violence against women.

In recent years, awareness has grown regarding domestic violence as a social challenge in Nigeria, including within Igbo society. Civil organizations, religious institutions, and governmental bodies have engaged in advocacy, education, and support services for victims. Nonetheless, significant obstacles remain, including underreporting of incidents due to stigma, cultural barriers, and a lack of faith in the justice system. Furthermore, many victims face barriers to accessing the resources and support necessary to escape abusive dynamics.

The interplay of traditional practices with modern influences affects perceptions and responses to domestic violence in the Igbo community. Some cultural traditions may inadvertently reinforce power imbalances, complicating efforts to confront abusive behaviors. Addressing domestic violence requires cultural sensitivity and broad-based advocacy. As Eziefule (2019) outlined, a comprehensive approach involving legal reforms, social initiatives, and cultural interventions is necessary. This includes strengthening legal frameworks, creating safe spaces, providing counseling services, and introducing economic empowerment

programs for survivors to rebuild their lives and break the cycle of violence.

Igbo Christian Family Formation, Solidarity, and Domestic Violence: Marriage holds a central place in Igbo culture, viewed not just as a union of individuals but as a joining of families and their legacies (Onwuejeogwu, 2013). Marriage rituals, including bride price payments, reflect commitment and acknowledgment of the union within the community. The traditional marriage process begins with a visit from the groom's family to the bride's, typically accompanied by the groom's father or another elder.

This encounter marks the formal intent to marry and sets into motion a series of investigations into both families to ensure reliability and compatibility for marriage. Investigating potential hereditary issues, divorce rates, and behavior history is paramount in this regard. Upon positive confirmations, an encounter involving extended families occurs, drawing together significant kinship networks to reinforce the commitment. Addressing various cultural practices, the "bride price," symbolizes appreciation and commitment, fostering unity between families (Nwoga, 2015).

In Igbo tradition, marriage culminates in significant rituals reinforcing the woman's transition into her husband's family and her new social role. These rites underscore the importance of community involvement in the marriage process, thereby solidifying familial ties and sustaining social bonds. The expectation of offspring is critical, as children symbolize cultural legacy and continuity (Uchendu, 2018). While divorce is discouraged, it remains permissible under certain circumstances, mediated by customary laws and community processes (Ezeani, 2014).

Religious influences shape Igbo marriage practices; traditional rituals often invoke blessings from ancestors, while Christianity introduces new rites that blend with existing practices. Despite globalization's impact, Igbo cultural values surrounding marriage remain significant, promoting principles of family, cultural identity, and social cohesion. Efforts continue to preserve these traditions amidst modern influences.

The issue of domestic violence does extend into the realm of Igbo Christians as well. While Christianity promotes love and respect, domestic violence persists across socio-economic divisions. Patriarchal norms significantly influence domestic dynamics, often clashing with Christian teachings on equality and mutual respect (Ofoegbu, 2015). Misinterpretations of religious texts can also perpetuate abusive behaviors, highlighting the need for church leaders to address domestic violence within their communities. Many recognize the need for congregations to foster healthy relationships rooted in equality (Okoro, 2020). Churches are increasingly taking an active role in addressing domestic violence through educational campaigns and support services. By integrating discussions about domestic violence into sermons and church activities, they create an environment that condemns abuse and encourages victims to seek help. Pastoral counseling can further exist as a means for individuals experiencing violence to find support and share their experiences.

Engaging both men and women in discussions about healthy relationships and masculinity is equally essential. Programs targeting men can aid in challenging harmful notions of masculinity, while women's groups can provide empowerment and solidarity for victims.

Socio-Cultural Context and Structure of Igbo Christian Homes: The socio-cultural context of Igbo Christian homes reflects a complex relationship between traditional values and Christian teachings, influencing family dynamics deeply. Igbo society traditionally emphasizes a patriarchal structure, placing men in authority and defining women's roles primarily as caregivers (Nwosu, 2020). This intertwining of cultural and religious expectations can create power imbalances that contribute to domestic violence.

In Igbo Christian households, these patriarchal norms can be reinforced by biblical interpretations that highlight male headship and female submission. While Christianity advocates for love and equality in relationships, selective teachings may amplify traditional gender roles, even when they contradict fundamental gospel messages. Thus, the lens through which theological teachings are viewed significantly impacts behavior within homes and often shapes responses to domestic violence.

Community attitudes towards domestic violence are also affected by the perception of family reputation and harmony. The emphasis on maintaining family integrity can lead to the discouragement of external intervention in domestic disputes, prioritizing reconciliation over addressing abuse (Ogbuagu, 2019). This can perpetuate cycles of violence and inhibit victims from seeking help, fearing stigma and public scrutiny.

The church's role in shaping attitudes towards domestic violence can be pivotal. Although churches serve as support systems, some leaders might hesitate to tackle domestic violence due to concerns about maintaining family unity or fearing stigmatization (Chukwu, 2019). Educational efforts within church settings must be geared towards equipping leaders to address domestic violence comprehensively and responsively.

Furthermore, traditional expectations surrounding child-rearing can perpetuate cycles of violence. Children raised in households where abuse is normalized may internalize this behavior, particularly when combined with cultural narratives that prioritize obedience and submission to authority figures (Nnodim, 2017). Consequently, addressing domestic violence in Igbo Christian homes necessitates engaging with the broader cultural landscape's implications for child development.

Economic factors significantly influence domestic violence dynamics. In many Igbo Christian homes, economic dependency can entrap individuals, particularly women, in abusive relationships. Traditional beliefs often assign men as the providers, leading to control over financial resources that can be used to enforce compliance or restrict access to support systems (Ezeh, 2018).

Efforts to counter domestic violence within Igbo Christian households must engage comprehensively with these economic realities while promoting gender equity and justice. Initiatives aimed at empowering women's independence and providing legal and psychological services for domestic violence victims are critical components of meaningful intervention.

Emphasis on family honour and reputation plays a crucial role in perpetuating domestic violence in these homes. The pressure to maintain a façade of respectability can severely discourage victims from seeking help, perpetuating a culture of silence surrounding abuse (Nwoke, 2009). Additionally, the traditional concept of bride price could be misconstrued, leading to a perception of ownership and contributing to controlling behaviours within marriage.

Nature and Forms of Domestic Violence in Igbo Christian Homes: Domestic violence in Igbo Christian homes manifests in various forms, with physical, emotional, and psychological abuse often intertwined. Physical violence often arises from cultural norms that legitimize male authority, with acts of violence justified as means of exerting control over women (Eze-Anaba, 2016).

A victim's account, such as that of C. Anaeto, illustrates the severe and systemic nature of physical abuse among some couples. The persuasive tragedy in her experiences reflects the broader societal issue of domestic violence—a bidirectional problem requiring urgent attention.

The psychological effects of domestic violence are profound and can lead to long-lasting trauma, instilling fear and helplessness in victims. Ensuring victims are met with compassion and supportive resources is essential in the journey towards healing and overcoming violence in their homes. Recognizing and addressing domestic violence within Igbo Christian contexts is not solely about promoting resilience; it requires dismantling the cultural and religious structures that enable such violence to persist.

Causes of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is one of the societal problems that are caused by different factors. Pace (2023) explained the following factors as the major causes of domestic violence:

Poverty and unemployment: People in dire financial straits are more likely to be involved in domestic violence. Half of homeless women and children are victims of domestic violence. One major cause of this correlation is the fact that abuse victims in poverty often lack the means to escape the situation. They may not have access to legal help or be able to afford their own housing. Abusers usually take steps to keep their victims in poverty as well. For example, an abuser may sabotage a job opportunity for their victim in order to keep the victim dependent on the abuser.

Infidelity: The spousal relationship is meant to be based on trust and faith. However, at times, when the trust is put into question, it can act as one of the causes of domestic violence in marriage. If a partner feels that another is not preserving the sanctity of marriage and is cheating on them, they might think of violence as the solution. The suspicion of infidelity can make the partner bitter and lead to opportunity-based crime and violence.

Education: Around the world, education makes a huge difference in the rates of causes

of family violence. Each additional year of schooling is associated with an increase in awareness and a woman's ability to ward off unwanted sexual advances. Women with some secondary education lower their risk of domestic violence. This is possible because women with more education are more likely to see themselves as equal to their abusers and to have the means to secure their independence and avoid any factors of family violence. In support of the above (Nwaezuoke 2025) asserts "Integrate domestic violence education into school curricula, emphasizing respect, consent, and healthy relationships. This approach aims to shift attitudes among the youth regarding gender-based violence"(P.84)

Young parents: Parenting at a young age when the person is yet to learn the skills can lead to aggression, anger, frustration, and depression. This is possibly tied to other factors because young parents are more likely to be single, struggling economically, or have lower educational achievement. When you ask what causes domestic violence, this factor is a leading contributor. Collaborating the above Nwaezuoke (2025) posits that: Child marriage robs a girl of her childhood-time necessary to develop physically, emotionally and psychologically. In fact, early marriage inflicts great emotional stress as the young woman is removed from her parents' home to that of her husband and inlaws. Her husband, who will invariably be many years her senior, will have little in common with a young teenager. It is with this strange man that she has to develop an intimate emotional and physical relationship. She is obliged to have intercourse, although physically she might not be fully developed (P.82)

Relationship retention behavior: Retention and complex behaviours are one of the prime causes of gender-based violence in modern society. One of the causes of domestic violence in relationships is the thought process that violence can help save marriage. Many partners resort to domestic violence in marriage because they think this is the only way to retain their partner. Any threat to the relationship motivates the spouse to devise such retention strategies.

Historical factors: Freedom for women and respective equality is still a matter of debate and is being fought for. So, the change of mindset is bound to take time. So, what causes domestic abuse? Society was male dominant in earlier times. So, even if the situation of patriarchy and male dominance doesn't exist in all pockets of society, it is not entirely possible to eradicate one of the biggest causes of domestic violence in relationships all at once. Ultimately put the future in question. How to raise the kids? Which cultural ideology to follow? A lot comes into the scene if couples don't share cultural compatibility and/or disrespect each other's choices.

Cultural factors: When two people from different cultures decide to be wedded, it is not necessary that they both are acquainted with the differences in the culture. It might seem exciting at first, but with time, cultural differences can be one of the common causes of domestic violence in relationships. What might seem appropriate to one culture could be looked down upon in another. And this will create one of the significant causes of family violence. If couples do not adopt cultural differences with a conscious approach, this can lead to domestic violence causes. It can ultimately put the future in

question. How to raise the kids? Which cultural ideology to follow? A lot comes into the scene if couples don't share cultural compatibility and/or disrespect each other's choices.

Self defence: In the list of causes of domestic violence in relationships, self-defense can also act as an obvious factor. Many spouses can resort to violence to avoid any outbreak from their partner or act in response to their partner's abuse. That means if one partner is using any form of violence, another can mirror the same. On the other hand, the other partner can also take a step to introduce domestic violence if they feel a profound sense of relationship control from their partner. In order to balance Historical factors Freedom for women and respective equality is still a matter of debate and is being fought for. So, the change of mindset is bound to take time. So, what causes domestic abuse? Society was male dominant in earlier times. So, even if the situation of patriarchy and male dominance doesn't exist in all pockets of society, it is not entirely possible to eradicate one of the biggest causes of domestic violence in relationships all at once.

Alcoholism: The use of alcohol and drugs can also lead to the occurrence and be one of the causes of violence against women and men. Excessive drinking and drugs can be significant contributors to and causes of spousal abuse. This can lead to an ongoing pattern of abusive behavior by one partner. Alcoholism can lead to the formation of patterns, and if it is not controlled in time, it can lead to a constant need to maintain and control the relationship by the partner affected by the vice

Christian Teachings on Marriage and Family

Christian teachings on marriage and family are based on biblical principles that emphasize the sacred covenant between a man and a woman, ordained by God for companionship, support, and procreation (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5-6). Central to these teachings is the concept of selfless love, exemplified by Christ's sacrificial love (Eph. 5:25). Husbands are urged to love their wives as Christ loved the church, while wives are called to submit to their husbands (Eph. 5:22-24). Interpretations of these roles have evolved, balancing traditional gender roles with mutual respect. Unity and fidelity are also stressed, condemning adultery and divorce, except in cases of infidelity (Matt. 5:32; 1 Cor. 7:10-11). Based on the above Nwaezuoke, Oguechuo(2025) said Christianity often reinforces traditional gender roles, granting husbands authority to make binding decisions for their wives and children, and encouraging wives to accept this authority. Such beliefs may inadvertently contribute to domestic violence by implying that men have a right to act violently against women. Victims of domestic violence frequently grapple with suffering and seek to understand its causes. They may erroneously attribute their suffering to divine punishment based on past behaviors, such as premarital relations, fostering a superstitious rationale that shifts responsibility away from the abuser. For instance, a victim might believe her abuse is a consequence of her perceived sins, viewing God as a stern judge inflicting retribution rather than as a loving deity (P.83).

The family is seen as the foundational unit of society, with parents tasked with nurturing

their children in faith (Eph. 6:4). It serves as a microcosm of the church, where virtues like love, forgiveness, and reconciliation are practiced, while also addressing social issues, including support for the marginalized and opposition to domestic violence and neglect.

Marriage is often celebrated as a sacrament that invites couples to seek God's guidance and strength. Christian families are encouraged to embody virtues of stewardship, generosity, and service, thus becoming witnesses to God's grace. Overall, these teachings provide a framework for understanding the sacredness of familial relationships, guiding Christians in fostering homes characterized by compassion, integrity, and faithfulness.

Strategies for Combating Domestic Violence in Igbo Christian Homes

Combating domestic violence requires a multifaceted approach that acknowledges the complexity of the issue and the diverse needs of individuals and families affected by it. Various strategies are essential for addressing the factors contributing to domestic violence and reaching a broad spectrum of survivors and perpetrators.

Education and Awareness: Education and awareness programs are vital strategies for combating domestic violence in Igbo Christian homes. These initiatives empower individuals with knowledge, challenge harmful beliefs and attitudes, and promote prevention and early intervention. Educational programs serve as platforms to disseminate information about domestic violence dynamics, including forms, warning signs, and impacts on individuals and communities (Ngala, 2017).

By increasing awareness of domestic violence's prevalence and consequences, educational initiatives create a foundation for understanding and addressing this issue within the cultural and religious context of Igbo Christian homes. Additionally, these programs play a crucial role in challenging cultural norms and religious teachings that justify abusive behaviors. Religious leaders can reinterpret scriptures in ways that advocate for respect and non-violence in relationships (Aguocha, 2018).

Programs targeted toward survivors provide essential information about resources and support services, empowering them to seek help and break the cycle of abuse. Religious leaders can partner with NGOs and healthcare providers to ensure that survivors receive culturally sensitive care (Umeakuka, 2018). By offering information about shelters, hotlines, counseling services, and legal aid, these initiatives help survivors make informed decisions about their safety while addressing the stigma associated with seeking help.

Furthermore, educational programs can also target perpetrators of domestic violence, offering interventions that promote accountability and rehabilitation. Workshops and counseling sessions can address toxic masculinity while promoting healthy communication and conflict resolution skills (Uloka, 2017). By providing pathways to transformation, these programs contribute to breaking cycles of violence and promoting healing within families.

Community mobilization is another critical aspect of education and awareness programs. Religious leaders can organize rallies and public campaigns to raise awareness about domestic violence, challenge social norms that condone abuse, and advocate for supportive policies (Onyedikanna, 2015). By mobilizing grassroots support and engaging with various sectors, these programs foster a culture of zero tolerance for domestic violence.

These educational initiatives must also effectively address the interplay between culture, religion, and domestic violence by tailoring programs to fit the specific cultural and religious contexts of Igbo communities. By integrating traditional values with messages of gender appreciation and respect, these initiatives can challenge harmful practices while fostering a nuanced understanding of domestic violence and its root causes.

Moreover, these programs can reach individuals across generations, fostering long-term prevention. By incorporating age-appropriate curriculum into schools and community events, initiatives can instill values of empathy and healthy relationships from an early age, paving the way for future generations to be free from domestic abuse.

Additionally, education and awareness programs foster collaboration between religious institutions, government agencies, and civil society organizations, enhancing the effectiveness of efforts to combat domestic violence. This coordinated approach addresses the complex interplay of individual, interpersonal, and structural factors that contribute to violence in Igbo Christian homes.

Community-Based Interventions: Community-based interventions are essential for combating domestic violence in Igbo Christian homes, leveraging community networks and cultural norms to promote prevention and support. Recognizing that domestic violence is deeply embedded in broader community dynamics, these interventions foster collective responsibility and solidarity, challenging the normalization of violence.

These interventions unite community leaders, religious institutions, and organizations to create coordinated responses to domestic violence. Partnerships ensure survivors have access to essential support services, including shelters, counseling, and legal aid (Ekechukwu, 2018). Additionally, they provide opportunities for survivors to connect and share experiences within supportive environments.

Community-based interventions also involve disseminating information about domestic violence, promoting awareness of available resources. Events like workshops and community forums hosted by various institutions empower individuals with knowledge about domestic violence dynamics and prevention strategies (Ovuh, 2005).

Moreover, these interventions engage men and boys as allies against domestic violence. By challenging traditional notions of masculinity through targeted programs, they promote respect and empathy, contributing to

shifts in social norms regarding gender balance.

Additionally, these interventions address structural factors that perpetuate domestic violence, including poverty and unemployment. By advocating for policies that target these root causes, such as job training programs and social safety nets, community-based solutions create opportunities for individuals and families to escape cycles of violence.

Community-based interventions empower survivors by offering culturally sensitive and accessible services, ensuring they are not isolated or stigmatized. By creating safe spaces for sharing experiences, survivors receive the support necessary for rebuilding their lives.
These interventions also promote accountability and prevention by challenging attitudes that perpetuate domestic violence. Workshops, campaigns, and educational programs foster a culture of intolerance towards abuse, equipping community leaders and stakeholders with the tools needed to recognize and respond to signs of domestic violence effectively (Chime, 2018).

Community-based interventions must adopt an intersectional approach to address domestic violence's intersectionality with other forms of oppression, including race, class, sexuality, and disability. This ensures that all individuals receive culturally competent and inclusive support. Moreover, advocating for social justice helps dismantle systemic barriers that perpetuate violence and discrimination. By mobilizing community resources and promoting education and awareness, community-based interventions create supportive environments where all individuals can thrive free from violence. They enhance collaboration and collective action, contributing to a more equitable and inclusive society.

Legal and Policy Framework: Establishing a robust legal and policy framework is a critical strategy for combating domestic violence in Igbo Christian homes. Nwaezuoke, Oguechuo (2025) said "The violence persists because discriminatory laws condone and even legalize certain forms of violence against women. Dismissive attitudes of the police and an inaccessible justice system compound the failures of the state to protect women's rights. Violence against women in the home is generally regarded as belonging to the private sphere and therefore shielded from outside intervention. A culture of silence reinforces the stigma that the victim suffers"(P.80)

Laws and policies provide the foundation for holding perpetrators accountable, protecting victims, and preventing future instances of abuse within the community. By enacting legislation that defines domestic violence, criminalizes abusive behaviours, and establishes legal protections for survivors, governments can send a clear message that violence within the home is unacceptable and will not be tolerated (Ezennia, 2018). The Umunna and Umuada's effectiveness in influencing broader societal issues in this regard can be limited due to the fact that their authority and decision-making processes may be perceived as patriarchal, which can marginalize the voices of women and younger generations who seek progressive

change. Legal frameworks can provide survivors with access to essential services such as shelters, counselling, and legal aid, ensuring that they have the support and resources needed to escape abusive situations and rebuild their lives. Moreover, a strong legal and policy framework serves as a deterrent to potential perpetrators by imposing consequences for abusive behaviour and sending a signal that domestic violence is a serious crime with serious repercussions (Akor, 2005). By holding perpetrators accountable through criminal prosecution, civil protection orders, and other legal mechanisms, the legal system can help break the cycle of violence and ensure the safety and well-being of survivors and their families. Legal frameworks can provide survivors with avenues for seeking justice and restitution, empowering them to assert their rights and reclaim control over their lives. For Nwaezuoke, Oguechuo(2025),"domestic violence is human rights violation, irrespective of cultural or religious justifications"(P.84). Collaborate with local NGOs and community leaders to enhance outreach.

Conclusion

This study has provided a comprehensive examination of the impact of domestic violence in Igbo Christian homes within the Central Sub-Cultural zone of Igbo land, highlighting the complex interplay between cultural traditions and religious beliefs. Domestic violence remains a significant issue in this context, perpetuated by deeply ingrained patriarchal norms and occasionally justified through misinterpretations of religious teachings. These socio-religious dynamics create unique challenges in addressing and mitigating the effects of domestic violence. The role of religious leaders and the church is crucial in shaping community attitudes toward domestic violence. While churches have the potential to be powerful agents of change, promoting love, respect, and safety within the family, the dual mandate of upholding marital sanctity and addressing abuse can be difficult to navigate. This study underscores the need for religious leaders to receive training and support to effectively advocate for victims and promote non-violent, respectful relationships within the home.

Contemporary socio-economic changes, such as increased education and urbanization, have begun to challenge traditional norms and raise awareness about domestic violence. Despite these advances, victims continue to face significant barriers to seeking help, including societal stigma, fear of retaliation, and inadequate support systems. The findings emphasize the importance of developing more robust and accessible support mechanisms for victims, tailored to the unique cultural and religious context of Igbo Christian homes. Suffice it to state, however, that the observation of domestic violence in Igbo Christian homes is considered a scandal mostly when the observer fails to make an effort to stop the violence. Even in law, the person's action can be likened to omission of crime. This is the reason Igbo culture despises the idea of someone witnessing evil and failing to condemn it. Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader discourse on domestic violence in Nigeria and provides practical recommendations for policymakers, religious leaders, and social workers. It calls for collaborative efforts to create a more

supportive environment for victims, emphasizing the importance of integrating cultural sensitivity with religious teachings to foster community harmony and individual well-being. Through continued awareness, education, and targeted interventions, there is hope for reducing the prevalence of domestic violence and promoting healthier, more equitable relationships in Igbo Christian homes.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the case studies and findings, the following recommendations are made:

Religious leaders should receive comprehensive training on domestic violence, its impacts, and effective ways to support victims. This is because, when they are empowered with the right knowledge, religious leaders can play a critical role in advocating against domestic violence and providing a supportive environment for victims.

Umunna should be supportive of ideas that are devoid of gender bias. Encouraging gender appreciation will help to reduce the menace of domestic violence, especially where one uses ones gender as an advantage.

Governments at the local level should come up with initiatives undertaken to raise awareness about domestic violence within communities. Using culturally relevant materials and involving local influencers, like religious leaders and counsellors can help in making these campaigns more effective.

Non-governmental organisation and government should establish and enhance support services like Welfare Centres for victims of domestic violence is crucial. These Centres should be easily accessible and well-publicized within the community to ensure that victims know where and how to seek help.

Efforts should be made to challenge and change the patriarchal norms that contribute to domestic violence. Schools, churches, and community groups should be engaged in these programmes to reach a broader audience. Government should essentially advocate for stronger legal protections for victims of domestic violence. Law enforcement agencies should be trained to handle cases of domestic violence with sensitivity and efficiency, ensuring that victims receive justice and protection.

Establishment of Guidance and Counselling services in the community can help to identify clients experiencing abuse and provide them with same emotional support. Survivors should understand their situation, control their feelings and be guided safely. When necessary, they can refer clients to specialize services such as advocacy or legal assistance. The community should be educated on domestic violence, in order to challenge stereotypes and promote healthy relationship.

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