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Keywords: *macho man, cultural norms, domestic violence, perpetrators, legal.*

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Keywords: macho man, cultural norms, domestic violence, perpetrators, legal.

I. Introduction

Intimate Partner Violence, commonly known as Domestic Violence or Spousal Abuse, knows no geographical, ethnic or cultural boundaries. It affects men, women and children worldwide. Domestic violence against men has been a controversial area in the study of domestic violence. There has been considerable debate on the topic, but very little scientific data exists (Gelles, 1974). The domestic violence conversation in Nigeria is centrally about women as victims and men as aggressors. Over decades, media attention and prevention programmes relating to domestic violence have mainly focused on women as the victims and men as the perpetrators. The underlying idea is that violence is predominantly physical and a prerogative of men. Domestic violence is not new to the Nigerian society and of recent male victims of intimate partner violence have become a part of regular public discourse on domestic violence. Ironically, of recent, beaming its search light on this, the media has brought to the fore cases of male victims- a development that has also triggered public interest.

Intimate partner violence (IPV), which includes physical, sexual, and psychological maltreatment of one partner against another, is a national social and health problem affecting hundreds of thousands of individuals and families a year (Centers for Disease Control 2006; Tjaden and Thoennes 2000). Over the past few decades, a growing number of studies have been released that support the contention that females perpetrate violence at rates equal, or similar, to males (Fiebert, 2004; Straus, 1999). This essay is primarily concerned with the domestic aspect of gender-based violence particularly among married couples or intimate partners generally. A common sense of domestic violence, as observed by Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre (2001:9), tends to imply a man being violent in some way toward a woman with whom he is in an intimate relationship.

How established a relationship has to be to qualify as 'intimate' is subject to different definitions. Despite the challenges being faced by sub-Saharan African States in enacting and implementing legislative reforms, however, there is now a widespread recognition that gender-based violence must be addressed. While many factors are known to influence public perceptions about violence against men in Nigeria, predictors of domestic violence by women against their partners have not been studied extensively. Thus, it is contended in this essay that more research is needed on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) against men, its impact on the family and the society at large. It is also suggested that governments, at all levels, should continue to aggressively pursue domestic violence offenders with a view to curbing the menace in the society.

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II. Gender-based Violence in Nigeria: Conceptualisation and the Popular Perspective

Today, domestic violence is viewed as a serious social problem and a crime. The debate is between those who perceive domestic violence only to battered women (Johnson, 2005) or battered men (Hines, Brown, & Dunning, 2007; Stwan, et al., 2008). This societal conflict has resulted in the argument that, if males are victims of domestic violence, then it is due to the self-defense of women being abused (Hines, Brown, & Dunning, 2007). The terms domestic violence, intimate partner violence and family violence are often used interchangeably. Collectively, they refer to a range of behaviours that are violent, threatening, coercive or controlling that occur within current or past family or intimate relationships (ANROWS & Our Watch 2015:3). Gender-based violence (GBV) can be described as any harm perpetrated against a person, as a result of power of inequalities that are based on gender roles. According to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (1992), gender-based violence is all encompassing, as it is not only limited to physical, sexual, and psychological violence, but include threats of coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty.

GBV is often divided into two interlinked categories, interpersonal and structural/institutional violence. Interpersonal violence refers to an act of economic, sexual, psychological or other violence perpetrated by an individual against another individual. Structural/institutional violence refers to 'any form of structural inequality or institutional discrimination that maintains a person in a subordinate position, whether physical or ideological, to other people within her family, household or community' (Manjoo, 2011). Both types involve the prioritisation of hegemonic masculinities above the rights of other gendered identities. Though, gender-based violence may take many forms, it cut across all cultures, disproportionately affect women and children mostly. Recent research from industrialized countries suggests that the forms of partner violence that occur are not the same for all couples who experience violent conflict. There would seem to be at least two patterns according to Johnson (1995):

- A severe and escalating form of violence characterized by multiple forms of abuse, terrorization and threats, and increasingly possessive and controlling behaviour on the part of the abuser
- A more moderate form of relationship violence, where continuing frustration and anger occasionally erupt into physical aggression

Gender-based violence (GBV) is the general term used to capture violence that occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender, along with the unequal power relationships between the two genders, within the context of a specific society." (Bloom 2008:14). Domestic violence against men is a term describing violence that is committed against men by the man's intimate partner (Sugg, Thompson, Thompson, Majuro, and Rivara, 1999). The general perspective however, is that the majority of persons affected by gender-based violence are women and girls, as a result of unequal distribution of power in society between women and men. Further, women and girls victims of violence suffer specific consequences as a result of gender discrimination.

The concept of domestic violence is based around power and control. The Duluth Model acknowledges the cycle of violence and how it is continued through methods of economic abuse, emotional abuse and, isolation (Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, n.d.). Much has been written about causes of and risk factors for intimate partner violence. A research (See Carlson and Worden, 2002) concludes that no single factor explains the occurrence of domestic violence. Rather, risk is associated with numerous factors, including social background (youth, low income, urban residence), relationship characteristics (conflict, marital status), and history and characteristics of perpetrators as well as victims (early exposure to family violence. stress, and personality problems of offenders).

Families from all social, racial economic, educational and religious backgrounds experience domestic violence in different ways. Domestic violence affects not just the victim but indirectly all those who witness the violence; children, family, relatives and witnesses to the physical abuse and violence. It predisposes the children to trauma and other psychological problems throughout their lives and worryingly, they may learn to become victims or abusers later on in life and hence the way the cycle continues. Victims of domestic violence are often in a position of dependence (financial, emotional, physical and otherwise) on the person abusing them, for instance, a husband and a wife, children and parents, dependent relatives, aged parents and domestic servants. Victims often have low self-esteem, finding it difficult to trust others. The anger and stress experienced by victims may lead to depression and other emotional disorders sometimes leading to suicide (CDC, 2006). Victims may also exhibit harmful health behaviour like excessive smoking, alcohol abuse, use of drugs and engaging in risky sexual activity.

III. The Changing Tide: Reasons and Circumstances

The victimization of men by their women partners is a serious social problem and it is largely ignored by the society. Compared to the extensive

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literature on male perpetrators of intimate abuse (Dutton, 2002; Hamberger & Hastings, 1991; Holtzworth Munroe, Bates, Smutzler, & Sandin, 1997), the literature on female perpetrators is scant. The abuse of men is being fuelled and fomented by government, legislation and societal stereotypes. Female victims seem to generate more passionate reaction from the public and government as observed over the years. And this is understandable, given their long history of abuse by men. Though domestic violence against men (DVAM) in all its forms is not new by any chance, what is of great concern is the fact that in the last few years there has been a rapid increase of cases involving women beating their husbands. The most common forms of violence are physical battering and psychological abuse.

Over time, women have been known to be victims of domestic violence but the tide is starting to turn now – abuse against men in the home is on the rise in Nigeria. In the last two years or thereabout, media reports have also alluded to suspicion over unfaithfulness and quarrels over money as the other contributing factors. A Public Opinion poll conducted by NOIPolls Limited (2016) in partnership with Project Alert on domestic violence revealed an increasing prevalence of domestic violence across Nigeria in recent times as reported by about 8 in 10 (78 percent) respondents. This prevalence is highest in the South-West geo-political zone (86 percent) and lowest in the South-South zone (70 percent). More findings revealed that 54 percent of Nigerians have suffered a form of domestic violence or know someone that has experienced domestic violence in their homes with majority of the victims being women as stated by 75 percent of respondents; although 'men' (16 percent) and 'children' (9 percent) are also known to be victims of domestic violence (NOIPolls, 2016).

Just like domestic violence against women, violence against men may constitute a crime, but laws vary across jurisdictions. Socio-cultural norms regarding the treatment of men by women, and women by men also differ, depending on the geographic region. According to reports, every year, about 3.2 million men in the U.S are the victims of assault by an intimate partner. Most assaults are of a relatively minor nature such as pushing, shoving, slapping or hitting, though a good number are more serious and some even end in homicide (Audu, 2015). As opined by Edward Rhymes (2014), the hesitance in speaking about female-initiated domestic violence is rooted in a very real concern about what the discussion can give way to: a dismissal and abnegation of the actual dangers women face. That, however, fails to be a compelling reason not to discuss the role of women in domestic violence.

The same protocols that are used to address domestic violence against women are used to handle domestic violence against men, and research tells us that the same abusive behaviors and tactics demonstrated by men (physical, verbal and emotional threats and intimidation) are also demonstrated by women. And the fear and shame that is felt as a result of being abused, as well as the excuses made to cover up the abuse, are not gender-specific (Rhymes, 2014). In Nigeria, the reasons for domestic violence have been identified to include drunkenness, infidelity, and financial misappropriation (Ilika et al., 2002). Abuse of men takes many of the same forms as it does against women - physical violence, intimidation and threats; sexual, emotional, psychological, verbal and financial abuse; property damage and social isolation. Many men experience multiple forms of abuse. Men, more so than women, can also experience legal and administrative abuse - the use of institutions to inflict further abuse on a victim, for example, taking out false restraining orders or not allowing the victim access to his children.

From the title of this essay, it clearly suggests the fact that women have always primarily been victims of gender-based violence and that the upsurge in cases of women being perpetrators are symptomatic of their past horrible experiences and thus, a sort of revenge to get back at their spouses when provoked. As a matter of fact, the fallacy that women only use violence in the context of self-defence and retaliation deserves attention. Many studies suggest that self-defence is not always the cause of female violence. Straus (1997) found that about equal numbers of women and men attacked partners who had not been violent to them during the previous one year.

Several studies have found that male victims of intimate partner violence have steadily increased, although the numbers of victims are not always equal to women. A report (See The Observer, 2010), claims that about two in five of all victims of domestic violence are men, contradicting the widespread impression that it is almost always women who are left battered and bruised. Men assaulted by their partners are often ignored by police, see their attacker go free and have far fewer refuges to flee to than women, says a study by the men's rights campaign group *Parity*. The analysis of statistics on domestic violence shows the number of men attacked by wives or girlfriends is much higher than thought. Its report, *Domestic Violence: The Male Perspective*, states: "Domestic violence is often seen as a female victim/male perpetrator problem, but the evidence demonstrates that this is a false picture"(The Observer, 2010). Men who find themselves as victims of domestic violence are often viewed by and made to feel emasculated and weak.

The prevalence of women as perpetrators of partner abuse in sub-Saharan Africa ranges from fairly low in South Africa for "hitting, pushing, or slapping," the most common forms of partner abuse (Kaminer et al., 2008), to 34% in a Kenyan population-based survey (Simister, 2010). In a household survey of several thousand men and women conducted in mainly rural areas across eight sub-Saharan countries, 14% of men

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and 18% of the women reported partner abuse victimization notwithstanding wide differences in prevalence between countries and even within countries by languages spoken (Andersson et al., 2007 cited in McCloskey et al, 2016:282). According to these researchers, the largest gender gaps in self-reports of victimization were in the two countries with the lowest (Malawi) and the highest (Zambia) overall prevalence of partner violence—more than twice as many women as men disclosed victimization in Malawi (11% vs. 6%) and 42% more in Zambia (36% vs. 21%). Although domestic and gender based violence has been, and remains an issue of great concern in Nigeria, there are still insufficient data to truly measure the extent of damage this social malaise may have done to the psyche of many families.

Domestic violence, having women as perpetrators, has been on the increase in Nigeria, particularly in the last few years. The increase, largely attributed to the renewed media focus on this aspect of gender-based violence, is often rationalised on the premise of self-defence or revenge attacks by the women. Thus, in what may be regarded as one of the landmark changes in human history, the trend is empirically turning the conventional narratives against men in an African society like Nigeria. Curiously, despite numerous studies that report the preponderance of domestic violence being perpetrated by men against women, the latter are becoming perpetrators of some of the most heinous domestic violations in their marriages. Partially due to the socio/cultural inhibitions- the Nigeria society is a highly patriarchal one, in which men have bloated egos- men generally feel ashamed, worthless and sometimes confused when abused by the opposite sex. Domestic violence against men, according to Olusode (cited in Oladipo, 2012), is a daily occurrence but such cases are not reported due to the stigma and male chauvinism. Olusode observes that:

> Indeed there are cases of domestic violence against women but there is no doubt that men are also experiencing violence from their wives and girlfriends. The issue is that these men do not come out to tell people that they were beaten by their wives or violated by their female lovers. They even hardly tell such things to their friends due to the fact that it is seen as a shame for a man to be beaten up by a woman.

A review of the literature indicates that like men, women initiate abuse, women commit unilateral aggression (i.e., against non-abusive partners), sometimes of a serious nature, and the majority of abusive relationships involve mutual abuse; the evidence is broadly consistent, regardless of the gender of the respondents (Dutton and Nicholls, 2005; Ehrensaft et al., 2004). Findings from studies examining women's motives for using aggression mirror research comparing the prevalence and incidence of abuse by men versus women, motives and contexts reflect the sampling procedures used in the various studies (Dutton, et al 2016). Specifically, research in female clinical samples reveals high rates of self-defense, retaliation, and aggression reportedly due to fear of impending attacks by partners that have been assaultive previously (e.g., Saunders, 1986 cited in Dutton et al, 2016). There also is some evidence to suggest that women's aggression is a reflection of dysfunctional attempts to establish emotional closeness to their partner. Fiebert and Gonzalez (1997) found women reported using abusive tactics to obtain their partner's attention and to attempt to engage them.

In what ways can a woman met out domestic violence on her man besides assaulting him physically? Here are a few ways a woman can be guilty of domestic violence according to Makinde (2016):

- If she is excessively possessive, act jealous, or harass him with constant accusations of being unfaithful.
- If she threatens to hurt or kill him.
- If she verbally abuses him, belittles him, calls him names like stupid, moron, etc, puts him down or humiliates him in front of his friends, colleagues, or family or even on social media sites as this is the latest trend.
- If she intimidates him with guns, bottles, knives, pestle or other weapons.
- If she destroys things that belong to him. For example we often hear of women smashing their husband's car windshield or oter properties in the home like TV and Glass doors whenever they are upset.
- If she prevents him from going to work, takes away his car keys or tries to control where he goes and whom he sees.
- If she controls how every penny is spent in the household and deliberately default on joint financial obligations.
- If she enjoys fabricating stories or making false allegations about him to his friends, employer, or the outside world generally just so as to damage his reputation or find ways to manipulate and isolate him.
- If she makes unwanted sexual demands; forcing him to have sex or engage in sexual acts against his will or to do things sexually that he is not comfortable with.
- If she stops him from seeing family members and friends or she is jealous of time he spends with them or she therefore tries to control who he sees, where he goes, or what he does.
- If she is stalking him or monitoring his every move in person, his social media accounts, his emails or his phone.

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- If she constantly taunts him that he is a bad parent or threatens to hurt or take away their children.

Many cases of violence against men however do not catch public attention because the concerned parties, usually the men, do not know what to do about it or are afraid to speak out. The few cases that capture media or public attention are often horrific in one way or another. When such cases are reported to the relevant authorities or raised in public, victims often face social stigma as well as possibilities of retaliation and other dilemmas. Cultural norms about the treatment of men by women as well as of women by men have varied greatly depending on geographic region and sub-region, even area by area sometimes, and physically abusive behavior of partners against each other is regarded varyingly from being a crime to being a personal matter (Njuguna, 2014). Even while there has been a marked shift in the way this issue is discussed and a definite push to have it taken more seriously, there are still far too many stories going untold. Interestingly, the other story pertaining to women readily attracts public attention as often told by women themselves. According to Mari Lilleslåtten (2017), "women's lives are primarily studied by female researchers. This is also the case when it comes to the field women, peace, and security. Most research focus on and attend to women's voices, meaning that we hear one side of the story".

IV. Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Law

As a general matter, but with significant variations in the scope and type of protection afforded, gender crimes are covered by international humanitarian, criminal, and human rights law (Askin and Stefan, 2003). The widespread inclusion of a prohibition of gender-based violence in international and regional treaties and declarations, its recognition and application by the international tribunals, as well as its prevalence in the national legislation of the majority of States indicates that this prohibition represents a consensus in the international community about the normative force of a prohibition on gender-based violence (Stark, 2001).

Governments are legally obligated to address the problem of gender-based violence through a range of measures, including legislation. In Nigeria, the Violence Against persons (prohibition) Act (VAPP) was passed into law in May, 2015. The Act was a result of agitations for protection of persons against the different forms of violence. The Act is the result of 14 years of activism by civil society. Starting just after the transition to democracy with the formation of the Legislative Advocacy Coalition against Violence against Women (LACVAW) in 2001, activists consistently pushed for national legislation prohibiting violence against women. The content of the Act is home grown, reflecting the realities of violence in Nigeria today, even as it incorporates provisions based on Nigeria's commitment to international human rights principles. First presented to the House of Representatives in May 2002, the Bill on Violence Against Women became a Bill on Violence Against Persons in 2008 when it was harmonised with 8 other Bills on gender based violence in the National Assembly. It took another seven years for it to become law (Anarado, 2015).

Violence, both at the home front and the larger society, is fast becoming a trend in the recent day Nigeria. Daily, we hear of someone killing or maiming their spouse; or a scorned lover pouring acid on an ex-lover; or someone being forcefully taken away from their family and loved ones. It was the need to protect citizens from violence such as these that led to the enactment of the VAPP Act, 2015. The Violence Against persons (Prohibition) Act is an improvement on the penal and criminal code in relation to violence; it also makes provision for compensation to victims as well as the protection of their rights. The content of the Act is rich in its provisions as it covers most of the prevalent forms of violence in Nigeria today ranging from physical violence; psychological violence; sexual violence; harmful traditional practices; and socio-economic violence. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) is named as the service provider (section 44).

Under the VAPP Act, rape[section 1], spousal battery[section 19], forceful ejection from home[section 9], forced financial dependence or economic abuse [section 12], harmful widowhood practices[section 15], female circumcision or genital mutilation[section 6], abandonment of children[section 16], harmful traditional practices[section 20], harmful substance attacks [section 21] such as acid baths, political violence [section 23], forced isolation and separation from family and friends[section 13], depriving persons of their liberty[section 10], incest[section 25], indecent exposure [section 26] and violence by state actors[section 24] (especially government security forces) among others are punishable offences. Victims and survivors of violence are entitled to comprehensive medical, psychological, social and legal assistance by accredited service providers and government agencies, with their identities protected during court cases. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) is named as the service provider.

The major drawback in relation to this law, as variously pointed out by analysts, is its limited application to the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja and only the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory Abuja empowered by an Act of Parliament has the jurisdiction to hear and grant any application brought under the Act. Although some states of the federation like Lagos, Imo, Ekiti, Kogi, Amambra, Plateau etcetera have enacted related legislation, it is expected that the remaining states of Nigeria will take immediate necessary action to

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adopt and enact similar law on violence against persons. However, the concern in this essay goes beyond the limited application of the law.

Given that there are many hundreds of support programs, Web sites and public-interest media items for female victims of domestic violence and only a handful of Web sites for male victims, perhaps this may have bolstered the general perception that women are mostly victims of domestic violence and dampened the spirit of male victims from speaking out to seek help.

With regards to the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Law in the country, it is envisaged that lack of political will from leaders, civil servants and other decision-making bodies as well as community interest can affect the effective implementation of the law. The low level of awareness about the law, the culture of condoning domestic violence as a family affair not deserving to be reported as a crime, and the negative depiction of victims of domestic violence who flee from perpetrators, have combined to limit the enforcement of the law. Though it appears gender neutral by affirming the fact all persons suffer some form of violence, the concern in the public domain, especially by the civil society groups, has always been on the protection of women and girls from violence as exhibited in the initial draft of the bill entitled: Violence Against Women (Prohibition) cannot be said to have changed with the new title.

V. Between Law and Culture: Implementation and the Envisaged Outcomes

Sexual violence against men as a constituent element of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes often goes under noticed, under prosecuted, and, ultimately, under punished (Lewis, 2009). Feminist theory states that intimate partner violence is an accepted form of "power and control" by men in a patriarchal society. But according to Straus (2011) the predominant immediate motives for violence, by women as well men, are frustration and anger at some misbehavior by the partner:

> They are efforts to coerce the partner into stopping some socially undesirable behavior or to practice some socially desirable behavior. … Studies have found that women engage in coercive control as much as men.

Further, intimate partner violence is more likely to be mutual or female-initiated than male-initiated. In an analysis of 36 general-population studies on IPV and dating violence, Straus (2011) found that women were half as likely to perpetrate serious physical violence. The 14 studies which also examined whether the violence resulted in physical injury showed that men inflicted injuries more often than women, but the difference was not that great. The rate for women injuring a partner was 88% of the male rate. Studies with a high percentage of men inflicting injury are, without exception, also studies with a high percentage of women injuring a partner. The impacts of domestic violence on male victims include:

> Fear and loss of feelings of safety; Feelings of guilt and/or shame; Difficulties in trusting others; Anxiety and flashbacks; Unresolved anger; Loneliness and isolation; Low self-esteem and/or self-hatred; Depression, suicidal ideation, self-harm and attempted suicide; Use of alcohol or other drugs to cope with the abuse; Physical injuries; Sexual dysfunction and/or impotence; Loss of work; Loss of home; Physical illness; Loss of contact with children and/or step-children; Concern about children post separation (http://www.oneinthree.com.au/malevictims/).

One of the ways women's acts of violence are explained is that they're said to be acts of self-defense. And while in many cases this is true, one would have to systematically discount the testimonies of thousands of victims who report otherwise to believe this is the only context in which men are battered by women (Gaboury, 2013). Psychosocially, depending on prevailing cultural norms, a male victim of intimate partner violence may additionally face isolation, abandonment by family members (who consider him a weakling), shame, and stigmatization.

Domestic violence against men is a term describing violence that is committed against men by the man's intimate partner (Sugg, et al, 1999). United Kingdom-based campaign group Parity, claims that assaults by wives and girlfriends are often ignored by police and media. Men assaulted by their partners are often ignored by police, see their attackers go free and have far fewer refuges to flee to than women (Audu, 2015). Data from Home Office statistical bulletins and the British Crime Survey show that men make up about 40% of domestic violence victims each year. Figures suggest that as many as one in three victims of domestic violence are male. However, men are often reluctant to report abuses by women because they feel embarrassed, or fear that they won't be believed, or worse, that the police will assume that since they are male, they are the perpetrators of the violence and not the victim (Audu, 2015).

Despite over 30 years of research documenting that men can sustain female-perpetrated physical, sexual, and psychological IPV, these findings remain controversial. Those that are especially controversial are statistics showing that women report using physical IPV at equal or higher rates than men, a finding that has been replicated in dozens of studies (Archer 2000 cited in Douglas and Hines, 2011). This finding of a high rate of violence by female partners has been challenged primarily on conceptual bases because it is inconsistent

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with the dominant theoretical perspective of the cause of IPV: the patriarchal construction of the society (Ferraro and Johnson 1983; Marshall 1992; Miller and White 2003 cited in Douglas and Hines, 2011). This controversy may help explain why men may face difficulties when seeking help for IPV victimization.

A major reason men are often reluctant to report victimization concerns socio-cultural stereotypes of masculinity; male victims of IPV often hide their suffering due to fear of being judged negatively by others, and/or having their masculinity questioned. For some men, this evasive behavior is based upon the fear of being ridiculed by friends or co-workers, by shyness in dealing with peers and/or with (non-violent) women, and by fear of people saying that the woman is the real victim, and must have been acting in self-defense (Migliaccio, 2002). For a man to admit he is the victim of female perpetrated IPV necessitates the abandonment of the veneer of machismo which society expects from men, and to admit being submissive to a female partner. For some men, this is an admission they are unwilling, or unable, to make. Some researchers have also demonstrated a degree of socio-cultural acceptance of aggression by women against men, whereas there is a general condemnation of aggression by men against women. This can lead to men not considering themselves victims, and/or not realizing the IPV they are experiencing is a crime.

Philip Cook's book *Abused Men: The Hidden Side of Domestic Violence* offers an account of the politics of statistics across four decades of research on intimate partner violence, chronicling the ways in which the battering of men is overlooked and under-discussed. Cook points out that women make up 20% of domestic violence arrests and, in the reissued version of the book released in 2009, shows how these figures have changed over time, reflecting reporting practices rather than a dramatic increase in the levels of violence (Gaboury, 2013). In Nigeria, the difficulties preventing the creation of implementable domestic abuse policy originate from the sensitive nature of the topic. The discussion of private matters such as sex and marital relationships presents a taboo in Nigerian culture. Defying a traditional societal role is also considered to be a societal transgression (Sogade, 2016). The underlying cultural belief in our hyper masculine society considers men who suffer from violence at home as weak- the kind to be shamed and ridiculed and pinned up as examples of men who were simply "not man enough" (Pala, 2016). For largely this reason, battered men remain invisible, left with nowhere to turn, in a society that firmly believes that 'weak men' are second class victims squarely to blame for provoking the ire of their partners (Pala, 2016). According to Baker-Jordan (2017):

> The way we construct masculinity excludes weakness and assumes men will be physically dominant over one another and over women. It's what sociologist Paul Kivel calls the "act-like-a-man box," in which men are expected to be violent and in control, particularly in control of women, while suppressing their emotions and sucking it up whenever life doesn't go their way. When a man steps outside of this box, he is often ridiculed as weak or as not being a "real" man.

Curiously however, whereas women who experience domestic violence are openly encouraged to report it to the authorities, it has been argued that men who experience such violence often encounter pressure against reporting, with those that do facing social stigma regarding their perceived lack of machismo and other denigrations of their masculinity. Additionally, intimate partner violence (IPV) against men is generally less recognized by society than IPV against women, which can act as a further block to men reporting their situation.

It is argued that part of the reason that many African governments have not yet created or effectively enforced laws against domestic violence is that such laws are viewed by some as contrary to traditional culture. Before the domestic violence bill passed in Ghana, for example, some traditional rulers stated that they felt the bill was an undesirable imposition of Western values, and that they saw the bill as "destructive, rather than helpful, to family life within the cultural context of Ghana" (Dovlo, 2005). Similarly, in Nigeria, the hitherto draft domestic violence bill was criticized on the grounds that its provision against marital rape is "western" and "against the culture of Nigeria" (Manuh, 2007).

VI. Male Victims: Breaking the Barriers of Silence

Gender-based violence has significant impact at the individual level, with victims suffering from physical and mental effects, loss of earnings and increased healthcare costs. It also has a wider societal impact, including lower productivity and thus reduced economic output and growth, and increased pressure on social and health services. Quantifying the cost of GBV in terms of human suffering and economic indicators is difficult: its hidden nature makes prevalence hard to establish. A number of methodologies have been developed, each of which offers both strengths and weaknesses, and these need to be assessed on a case by case basis.

The culture of silence and stigma in Gender Based Violence (GBV) undermines the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims, yet it remains shrouded in a culture of silence (UNFPA, 2015). Disclosure of abuse is a vital step in the process of finding a lasting solution and breaking the abuse chain. Thus, unless victims, particularly men in this instance

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(who are usually constrained by ego and shame) are willing to disclose abuse and make use of available resources, screening for and eventual management of Intimate Partner Violence may be heavily constrained. Indeed, in some instances, the rationale for government funding being directed to services for male perpetrators and women and children victims of violence is often given as, "men make up such a small percentage of victims of family violence that services should focus on the majority of clients: women and children" (Walks, 2012).

The law enforcement response to domestic violence is low partly because victims do not want to report the crime and police officers do not think that responding to calls relating to domestic violence is real police work. According to Buzawa and Buzawa (1996) the same can be said for the court system because the dismissal of domestic violence cases is high in part because the prosecution makes the victims feel responsible, the attitudes toward the abuser tend to change over time for the victim, and the victims think that the incident was a result of their behaviour. Victims tend to bear the costs of prosecution in the form of retaliation from an economical and physical standpoint.

Laws on domestic violence are gender neutral and apply equally to protect men as they do women. As earlier stated, often times, male victims do not come forward in domestic violence cases because they are worried about social stigma. However, by not coming forward they are also not getting the support they may need to break the cycle of violence. While expressing concern on the alarming rate of domestic in the country, Odumakin (Cited in Ajiboye et al, 2006) affirms that her office handles more than 2,400 cases of domestic related violence on annual basis. Ironically, only two have been cases of men who reported being beaten or brutalized by their wives.

VII. Concluding Remarks

Battered husbands cut across all ages, educational levels, and socioeconomic classes. Male victims of domestic violence deserve the same recognition, sympathy, support, and services as do female victims (Dienye and Gbeneol, 2009:338). A new law prohibiting violence is not sufficient enough to change Nigerian society but it does send a strong message that impunity for such action no longer prevails and that this issue is a matter of national concern. However the government, civil society, international donors and Nigerians need to take continued action and implement the VAPP Act to ensure perpetrators are convicted and, most importantly, that the culture that permits and enables violence changes (Anarado, 2015). The scholars in the field of criminal justice must actively research the reason for this rise in violence by the women. Empirical research needs to be conducted on police training of handling cases involving male victims. Community policing techniques such as public education campaigns and community meetings are needed to inform citizens about domestic violence, including intimate partner violence and the public expectation from law enforcement agencies (Shuler, 2010:171). The need to regard domestic violence from a psychological rather than a socio-cultural perspective should be emphasized. People should be made to understand that adults can change the social norms that justify domestic violence by (1) being role models and working together to end violence in the home (2) modelling non-violent relationship (3) disseminating information which condemns domestic violence.

To eliminate domestic violence and live in a society protective of human dignity requires political will on the part of the society and recognition of the humanity of everyone by all. As such, parents should teach their children to respect the institution of marriage. While couples should ensure that peace reigns in their families – just as a woman builds her home, the man should lay the foundation at building by not shirking his responsibilities and by showing love and care. Similarly, the media and civil society organisations must help in raising awareness about the criminal nature of domestic violence against a man or a woman, provide information about support services and protective laws, and encourage citizens to break the culture of silence by reporting cases of violations.

Furthermore, both African and religious values are at convergence on having peaceful families. So, traditional and religious leaders have a huge role to play in the restoration of family values, mutual love and respect, harping on the need for families to bind together in good and bad times (The Guardian, 2017). The taboo surrounding domestic violence prevents discussion and accurate data reporting. To resolve the tensions caused by this problem in Nigerian society, it will be necessary to remove the stigma around domestic violence. This can practically be achieved through the creation of government-sponsored community programs that directly address physical and psychological violence (Sogade, 2016). Domestic violence is not bound by gender, economic status, social station, age, culture, race or religion. Addressing domestic violence through a singular gender viewpoint undermines the equally real struggles of abused male victims (Pala, 2016). In Nigeria, besides the culture of silence and societal stigmatisation, information for the vulnerable as well as support for victims are still grossly inadequate making the fight against gender based violence a long walk yet to begin. These are some of the challenges needed to be addressed in order to end the increasing rate of Gender Based Violence (Channels T.V, 2014).

While legislations to curb domestic violence against men and women (persons) have been put in

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place in Nigeria, law enforcement agents should also accept that husband battering and other forms of domestic violence against men is a reality, from which men are to be protected. The brutality of a man by his wife, as rightly posited by Njuguna (2014), should not be seen as a trivial domestic matter. The trials of women who batter or kill their husbands must be given wide publicity in order to serve as deterrence to others who may have such tendencies. There should be greater advocacy to enlighten the public about the existence and reality of the evil of domestic violence against men by government agencies, religious groups and civil rights organizations. This will help in balancing the gender discourse on domestic violence.

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