

An Assessment Of The Prevalence And Effects Of Domestic Violence On Children In Michika Area Of Adamawa, Northeast Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study assesses the prevalence and effects of domestic violence on children in Michika area of Adamawa State, Northeast Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was used to recruit participants into the study. A sample size of 399 respondents from eight districts of Michika Local Government Area was used in this study. Data was collected using questionnaire, focus group discussion and key informant interview. The data generated was subjected to statistical analysis; simple percentage, mean and standard deviation were the statistical analytical tools adopted for data analysis. Based on the analysis carried out the findings revealed that domestic violence on children is prevalent and became quite significant with the insurgency and associated displacement that became a humanitarian disaster. This left a traumatic effect that is psychological, behavioral, social and educational negative to and on the children in the study area. The study therefore concluded that the prevalence of domestic violence in Michika has serious implications for the development of the society and the psychological, social and education of children in the area. The study further recommends that all stakeholders in the society ranging from government, religious bodies, civil society groups, community leaders must embark on vigorous awareness creation and education on the negative effects of domestic violence on the overall wellbeing of children in the society.*

Keywords: *Prevalence, Effects, Domestic, Violence, Assessment*

I. INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence involves the use of force or actions to violate the rights of victims. The World Health Organization defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal development or deprivation (WHO, 2002).

Domestic violence is a form of abuse broadly defined to include "all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence" (Council of Europe-COE, 2013); it may be committed by a person who is a family member or a person that has been an intimate partner or spouse, irrespective of whether they live together (COE2013; EUD 2012; SDDVA, 2014). It is a pattern of behavior physical or emotional, which

involves the abuse by one person against another or an animal in cohabitations such as pets, partners, siblings, co-workers, children or elders (WHO, 2014; NCPDV, 2014). Domestic violence often occurs because the perpetrator believes that abuse is acceptable, which produces intergenerational cycle of abuse and cultural systems that condone violence (eMedicine, 2014). It is essentially a driven attitude of consoling one's self which leads to hurting some other person within a relationship family (Huth-bocks 2005). The most commonly acknowledged forms are physical and sexual abuse, threats and intimidation, emotional and social abuse and economic deprivation (ALRC, 2010). It occurs across the world, in various cultures, (Watts *et al*, 2002) and affects people across society, irrespective of economic status (Kathleen *et al*, 1985).

When it comes to domestic violence towards children involving physical abuse, research in the UK by the NSPCC indicated that "most violence occurred at home" 78%; the United States Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) reported that for each year between 2000 and 2005, "female parents acting alone" were most common perpetrators of child abuse (Tonia *et al.*, 2007). Similarly, 40-60% of men and women who abuse other adults also abuse their children (APA, 1996) girls whose father's batter their mothers are 6.5 times more likely to be sexually abused by their fathers than are girls from non-violent homes (Bowker *et al.*, 1988).

For a country like Nigeria, the beating of children, which is a form of physical abuse is generally viewed as a form of discipline and thus acceptably seen as a means of enforcing conformity with the role of the child within a customary society (Ahie, 2009). Forms of abuse on children include: physical which may be in the form of beating, kicking, choking, confinement, or genital or body parts mutilations; sexual such as rape and molestation, using a child for prostitution or exposing them to pornography; neglect in the form of denying the child food, clothing, shelter, medical care, protection (Ibid). Accordingly, the effects of domestic violence on the development of children are social, educational, and psychological degeneration (WHO, 2012).

Social effects of Domestic violence towards the development of children are; inadequate foundation of safety and security that is normally provided by the family, desensitization to aggressive behavior, poor anger management and problem solving skills, isolation from friends and relatives, difficulty in trusting especially adults, excessive social involvement to avoid home, passivity with peers or bullying, engage in exploitative relationships as perpetrator or victims (ACADV, 2000). Educational effects of an abused child may present attributes like the abused child in some instances being overwhelmed and convinced that it's impossible to advance more than his/her peers, reduced intellectual competency, aggressive or passive refusal to go to school (WHO, 2012). Thus, Anikweze (2009) identified violence against children as a threat to well-being that leaves the child confused and angry, withdrawn, anxious or depressed on one hand; on the other hand, the child may become aggressive, becoming troublesome at home and at school. They may also become withdrawn, isolating themselves from others and may underachieve, academically, these adolescence may develop low self-esteem, finding it difficult to trust others.

Psychological effects are related to acting out or withdrawing from society, acting as a parent substitute, lying to avoid confrontation rigid defenses, excessive attention seeking, out of control behavior, manipulation, dependency, and mood swings (WHO, 2012). Behavior problems that emerge following exposure to violence can be thought of as stemming from a lack of appropriate role models, difficulties with emotion regulation skills. Children exposed to adult violence, may learn from these adults that aggressive behavior is a viable problem-solving option, and that physical aggression in close relationships is normal. Clearly, such lessons could create problems for children on the playground and later in life (Osofsky, 2014). 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 behavior like excessive smoking, alcohol abuse, use of drugs and engaging in risky sexual activity. An abused child, for instance, may grow up not to trust other people, may go into relationships with an aggressive mode or may become withdrawn, afraid to go into intimate relationship. This usually results in involvement in risky sexual behavior. Growing up in an abusive environment is what makes a person find the sight of a suspects being beaten or burnt to death, entertaining and enjoyable. Emotional or psychological abuse that is woven into family interactions and communications is also difficult for children to escape and may result in a home environment dominated by fear, control and the anticipation of violence (Stanley, 2011). It is what makes the youth happy and excited about being thugs for wicked politicians, as well as become hardened criminals who see nothing wrong in inflicting pain or death on others in the society. Domestic violence gives to a violent society because charity begins at home (Abayomi, 2013).

Since the last decade, there have been reported cases of violence against children such as torture, kidnapping, shootings, sexual harassment, rape, corporal punishment and so on. However there is no proper documentation of most of these violent acts. In response, a global in-depth study of violence against children was commissioned by the UN Secretary General as directed by the General Assembly Resolution 57/90 of 2002 to provide a global picture. The report provided information that various types of violence exist against children within the family, schools, alternative care institutions, detention facilities, places where children work and communities. In the year 2002, the WHO reported that 53,000 children were murdered worldwide. A survey from many countries showed that between 20 to 65 percent of school aged children are reported to have been bullied verbally or physically.

Furthermore WHO in 2002 estimated that 150 million girls and 73 million boys under 18 years were sexually abused; about 100 to 140 million girls and women in the world underwent some form of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or the other. In 2001, the International Labour Organization (ILO) report indicated that globally 218 million children were involved in various forms of child Labour; 126 million of these children were involved in dangerous work. Also, 1.8 million children worked in prostitution and pornography and that 1.2 million children were victims of child trafficking.

According to the most recent National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect, figures from 2005-2006 showed a 38% drop in the number of cases of child sexual abuse reported to CPS investigations and community professionals since 1993. The number of sexually abused children decreased from 217,700 in 1993 to 135,300 in 2005-2006.

On the indirect effects of violence on children, Yost *et al* (2005) observed that abuse towards a pregnant woman has a negative effect on the fetus, which can linger on the child after birth. They found a significant association between physical abuse and neonatal death (1.5% versus 0.2%), and between verbal abuse and low birth weight 7.6% versus 5.1%.

The development of children requires an environment conducive with minimal violence. In the event that is not provided these factors may be seen and are stratified as such prenatal effects; effects on Infants and toddlers, effects on Preschoolers, effects on school age Children, effect on adolescent Child, dual exposure, psychological effects, educational effects, social effects (Edleson, 1999).

Furthermore more from a general view point the effects of domestic violence on children can be devastating and long lasting especially on children and adolescents. Children are often principal victims of domestic violence. Witnessing abuse and living in an environment where someone else, usually a care giver is a victim of abuse, can be psychologically devastating for a child (Aihie, 2009). According to (Straus, 1994) children who are hit by parents have higher rates of depression than those whose parents disciplined in other ways and are more likely to think about suicides. Some researchers have also found that children whose mothers were abused by their partners have intelligence quotients (IQs) lower than usual (BBC New Education, 2003; Aihie, 2009).

It is against the foregoing that this study assesses the prevalence and effects of domestic violence on children using Michika Local Government Area as a case study.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

THE STUDY AREA

The area of the study is Michika local government area in Adamawa State located between latitude 10°20' and 11°00' North and longitude 13°0' and 13°40' east in the North-eastern part of Nigeria (Samuel, 1982). The study area is bounded to the east by the Republic of Cameroon, to the north by Madagali local government, to the west by Uba district and to the south by Mubi and Hong local government areas of Adamawa state and has an area size of 450 square miles, with a population of 213,008 (NPC, 2006). The area has eight districts and twenty-seven (27) village areas, each headed by a village head.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

A cross-sectional survey design was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on the prevalence and effects of domestic violence on children. The instrument of data collection was a semi-structured questionnaire and an audio recorder. Likert scale was used in framing questionnaires to obtain participants' preferences or degree of agreement with a statement or set of statements. Likert scales are a non-comparative scaling technique and are unidimensional in nature, (Bertram 2007). The nature of the questionnaire was explained to the participants before being administered by the researcher or research assistants.

Methods of data collection used for this study are: administration of questionnaire and interviews on respondents. Data was collected from 8 districts of the study area proportionally sampled based on a size of 399 determined by means of Yamane's formula, which is normally used where

the population parameter for the study is known (Yamane 1967).

Table 1 shows the calculation made by Yamane's formula in bringing out the selected sample size on how the questionnaire was distributed to the various districts. Three hundred and ninety-nine community dwellers residing within Michika Local Government, with each of the districts represented is shown.

S/N	DISTRICT	POPULATI ON	SELECTED SAMPLE
1.	Bazza	30,438	58
2.	Futu	17,643	33
3.	Garta	34,979	66
4.	Madzi	32,314	61
5.	Michika	55,778	104
6.	Nkafa	22,686	42
7.	Vi	3,961	7
8.	Zah	15,209	28
	TOTAL	213,008	399

Table 1: Distribution of Population in Michika Local Government Districts

Simple random sampling technique was used to recruit participants into the study, this technique was chosen because it provided equal probability or chances for participants to be selected (Achelis 2014).

The data generated were subjected to statistical analysis using the statistical package of the social science (SPSS). Data was analyzed for simple percentage, mean and standard deviations were determined. For the purpose of interpretation and decision making, the concept of cut-off point was employed. With regard to 4 point rating scale, the mean rating lower and upper limits were 2.4 and 2.5 respectively. To this end, all items with mean scores of 2.50 and above were regarded as being adequate while those with mean scores below 2.50 were regarded as inadequate. The decision rule were, any mean response greater or equal to 2.50 was regarded as accepted, while any mean response which was lower than 2.50 was regarded as Rejected.

Result

PREVALENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

The study shows that domestic violence against children in Michika L.G.A is prevalent as confirmed by 35.4% of the respondents through survey questionnaires. Key informant and focus group discussion (FGD) interview's also affirms this position. For instance, a woman community leader in one of the district in Michika aptly narrated in one of the key informant interview conducted and narrated thus:

Domestic violence in my area against children is very common especially, mostly children who are not living with their biological parents, they are being discriminately against and they suffer a lot of maltreatment such as merciless beating, denial of food and even opportunity to go to school while their own children are in school (Field interview 2015).

In the same vein, an Islamic cleric of Michika Central Mosque has this to say.

Domestic violence is very common here because most of our people do not provide the basic needs of their families, and children do not feel free with their parents just because they are denied of their rights (Field Interview, 2015).

This findings agreed with the latest key findings from the home office of statistical bulletin on crime in England and Wales 2008/9 report that domestic violence accounts for 1 in 7 (14%) of all violent incidents. It is estimated that the majority of those affected by domestic violence are of a younger population (between the ages of 16 and 35) and frequently have children living with them (LGA 2006:3). Statistic that shows how many children are affected by domestic violence are limited; the latest figures reported by Department of Health (DoH) in 2002 highlighted that 750,000 children are estimated to witness domestic violence each year.

Also in agreement with this finding is the first national study of the prevalence of domestic violence in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistic 1996) it found out that thirty-eight percent of these women reported that their children had witnessed the violence (132,400 women in population projections from this sample).

Also, the finding on the cause of domestic violence were revealed as: denial of children's right to decision making, refusal of parents or guardians to pay children school fees, acts of provocation on children, disobedience or refusal of children to comply to the instructions of their parents or guardians, children/wife abandonment, poverty and unemployment, peer influence and environmental influence, cultural influence, lack of care for the family and poor impulse control. In the light of this, a woman police officer noted in a key informant interview conducted as follows:

Most of the problems do come from the husbands who go out and drink a lot of alcohol and later on come back home late harassing and terrorizing the entire family members. Some men do not even provide what to cook, but they end up asking for food. And if the food is not available they end up beating the wife and the children if they dear to stop him. Poverty and unemployment play major role in the issue of domestic violence (Field interview 2015).

This finding is very much supported by Newman *et al.*, (2010) as they posited that substance abuse, unemployment, psychological problem, poor coping skills, isolation, and excessive dependence on the abuser are factors associated with domestic violence.

The views expressed with above on the issue of domestic violence in Michika L.G.A by the women police indicated that the major causes of domestic violence in the area has to do with the attitudes of husbands, poverty and unemployment among others

III. SOCIAL EFFECTS

Result of the social impact of domestic violence on the development of children is presented in Table 1. Item 40 of the table above shows that 31.40% of the respondents strongly agreed that children who witness domestic violence may find it hard to develop close and positive friendships, 26.39% also

agreed, 25.59% disagreed, while 16.62% strongly disagreed. The result indicated that respondents who agreed that children who witness domestic violence may find it hard to develop close and positive friendships were significantly higher than those who disagreed with mean 2.73

Furthermore, item 1 of the table above shows that 33.77% of the respondents strongly agreed that violent attacks on women during pregnancy predisposes children to physical disabilities, 28.76% also agreed, 21.64% disagreed while 15.83% strongly disagreed. This shows that respondents who agreed that violent attacks on women during pregnancy predisposes children to physical disabilities with mean 2.80.

S/N	ITEMS	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Children who witness domestic violence may find it hard to developed close and positive friendship	119(31.40 %)	100(26.39%)	97(25.59 %)	63(16.62%)	2.73	0.33	Agreed
2.	Violent attacks on women during pregnancy predisposes children to physical disabilities	128(33.77 %)	109(28.76%)	82(21.64 %)	60(15.83%)	2.80	0.35	Agreed
3.	Children who suffer domestic violence manifest effects such as disruption of the community	120(31.66 %)	102(26.91%)	79(20.84 %)	78(20.58%)	2.70	0.34	Agreed
4.	Domestic violence usually affects the behavior of children in the community in so many negative ways.	101(26.65 %)	111(29.29%)	100(26.39 %)	67(17.68%)	2.65	0.31	Agreed
5.	Children who experience domestic violence are likely to become deviant or commit crime.	106(27.97 %)	137(36.15%)	87(22.96 %)	49(12.93%)	2.79	0.34	Agreed
6.	Children witnessing domestic violence have difficulty in maintaining relationships	112(29.55 %)	137(36.15%)	77(20.32 %)	53(13.98%)	2.81	0.34	Agreed
7.	Children who are exposed to domestic violence mostly prefer living in isolation.	100(26.39 %)	119(31.40%)	91(24.01 %)	69(18.21%)	2.66	0.32	Agreed
				GRAND	MEAN	2.72	0.33	Agreed

Source: Survey Data, 2015

Table 1: Distribution of response on the Effects of domestic violence on social development of children in Michika L.G.A

Additionally, item 2 of the table above shows that 31.66% of the respondents strongly agreed that children who suffer domestic violence manifest effects such as disruption of the community, also 26.91% agreed, 20.84% disagreed while 20.58% strongly disagreed. This indicate that the respondents who agreed that children who suffer domestic violence manifest effects such as disruption of the community were significantly higher than those who disagreed with mean 2.70. Also item 43 of the table above shows that 28.23% of the respondents strongly agreed that male children who experience domestic violence such as man battering his wife is

likely to do same when he marries, 26.65% also agreed, 22.96% disagreed while 22.16% strongly disagreed. The study shows that the respondents who agreed that male children who experience domestic violence such as man battering his wife is likely to do same when he marries were significantly higher than those who disagreed with mean 2.61.

Item 3 of the table above shows that 26.65% of the respondents strongly agreed that domestic violence usually affects the behavior of children in the community in so many negative ways, 29.29% also agreed, 26.39% disagreed, while 17.68% strongly disagreed while 17.68% strongly disagreed. This reveals that the respondents that agreed that domestic violence usually affects the behavior of children in the community in so many negative ways were significantly higher than those who disagreed with mean 2.65.

Item 4 of the table above shows that 27.97% of the respondents strongly agreed that children who experience domestic violence are likely to become deviant or commit crime, 36.15% also agreed, 22.96% disagreed, while 12.93% strongly disagreed. This result shows that the respondents that agreed that children who experience domestic violence are likely to become deviant or commit crime were significantly higher than those who disagreed with mean 2.79.

Item 5 of the table above shows that 29.55% of the respondents strongly agreed that children witnessing domestic violence have difficulty in maintaining relationships with friends and family, also 36.15% agreed, 20.32% disagreed, while 13.98% strongly disagreed. This result indicate that the respondents that agreed that children witnessing domestic violence have difficulty in maintaining relationships with friends and family, were significantly higher than those who disagreed with mean 2.81.

Item 6 of the table above shows that 26.39% of the respondents strongly agreed that children who are exposed to domestic violence mostly prefer living in isolation, also 31.40% agreed, 24.01% disagreed, while 18.21% strongly disagreed. The result reveals that the respondents that agreed that children who are exposed to domestic violence mostly prefer living in isolation were significantly higher than those who disagreed with mean 2.66. The grand mean of 2.72 shows agreement with the statements in Table 1.

EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN

Also the finding on the impact of domestic violence on the social development of children in Michika L.G.A revealed the impact as follows: children finds it hard to develop close and positive friendship, they manifest effects such as disruption of the community, children who witness wife battering are likely to do same when they marry, children are likely to become deviants or commit crime, such children will have difficulty in maintaining relationships with friends and family and they mostly prefer living in isolation. A key informant interviewed provided information supporting the above findings; he made his points this way:

Yes, in fact, it can affect children's social development especially when the children are not well trained, the positive contributions you expect from such children in the society or community will not be possible.

Such children behave like destitute, they are more of problems to the society or community as they join peer group of drunkards, drug abuse, smokers of Indian hem etc. So it is impossible for them to think well they are very disorderly, violent or noisy in a public place in deed the impact is very terrible. (Key informant interview, 2015).

Similarly, an interview held with one of the Michika children spoke on the impact of domestic violence on his social development in this way:

To be sincere, the experience of domestic violence has made me not to feel like talking to anyone especially after being beaten. I always want to be alone and in fact, anybody that comes close to where I am, I feel like fighting him or her. I always want to be isolated and this has affected the way I relate with people today because I see myself getting angry and aggressive easily, so I find it difficult to make friends and I fight a lot (Key informant interview 2015).

A key informant interview held with the village head of Vi revealed as follows:

Such children cannot feel free among people, they cannot stay close to people, they mostly live in isolation, in fact, they do not associate with people, they prefer going to where they take alcohol, smoke Indian hemp, they also involve in drug abuse and they are the thieves that disturb the community on a regular bases (Key informant interview 2015).

Another key informant interviewed revealed as follows:

Domestic violence has a very serious impact on the social development of children because children who experience such are very quarrel-some among their mates, always looking for trouble, anywhere you see a scene of fighting be sure to find such children their if you see any destruction they are part of it in fact, they do not behave well. All that such children do is to roam around in the community, steal and create confusion, in fact they are socially handicapped (key informant interview 2015).

With these discoveries it is evident that domestic violence can actually hamper the social development of children. In line with the findings Osofsky (2005) noted that children exposed to adult violence, particularly intrafamilial adult violence, may learn from these adults that aggressive behavior is a viable problem solving option, and that physical aggression in close relationship is normal. Clearly, such lessons could create problems for children for children on the playground and later in life. Similarly Huth-Bock (1991) pointed out that childhood exposure to violence is associated with a variety of aggressive and otherwise maladaptive behaviors that can disrupt children's school adaptation and academic competence. Still, Huth-Bock (2004) observed that such behavior problems not only interfere with classroom learning, they also hamper children's efforts to make friends, another essential task of childhood and an important dimension of school adaptation. Also, Bagshaw (2007) pointed out that children in their own words, most often report feelings of sadness, confusion, fear and anger. Likewise, Humphreys *et al* (2008) in their studies of children's perspectives noted that children often discuss the emotional, physical and sometimes sexual abuse experienced by themselves and their families, as well as significant feelings of

fear of their violent fathers. Research continues to indicate that children affected by violence are more likely to experience higher rates of depression and anxiety, trauma symptoms and behavioral and cognitive problems.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study showed that domestic violence against children is prevalent with ripple effects in the form of dissociative disorders, physical disabilities, delinquencies, drugs and other forms of social misdemeanors. Accordingly, the prevalence of domestic violence in home in Michika Local Government Area has serious implications for the development of the society the psychological and educational development of children. The future of any nation depends on the quality of its children. Consequently, government must pay urgent attention towards eradicating the evil phenomenon of domestic violence in our society. Efforts must be made to ensure that children grow up in stable and responsible homes, so that they can become responsible citizens. The media should be used to enlighten the public on this issue for a long term positive social reorientation.

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