INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE: WHY FEMALE VICTIMS STAY ON IN MATRILINEAL SOCIETIES

Nnachi Amos Imo

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to study the incidence of intimate partner violence and why women remain in such violent relationship in matrilineal societies. The design for the study was cross-sectional survey design. Edda, Ebonyi State, Nigeria with a population of 210,000 was the study area. A sample size of 650 was used for the study. Questionnaires and focus group discussions were the instruments for data collection. The quantitative data were analyzed using percentages while data gotten from focus Group discussions were transcribed, organized and analyzed. Results show that physical, sexual, psychological and threats of violence are the types of intimate partner violence in the study area. Female victims remain because of fear of effect leaving may have on children, siblings, family and self. It is recommended that exhortation, community action, victim assistance programmes, legislation, empowerment and family involvement should be used to reduce violence and assist victims.

Keywords: Intimate, Partner, Violence, female Victims, Matrilineal

INTRODUCTION

Intimate partner violence, especially in developing societies, represents a serious human rights issue. It is also part of the fabric of family violence. Intimate partner violence is a universal phenomenon. It occurs in all societies and countries. However, worldwide reports of violence against women vary. Dubois and Miley (2010) report that a review of 48 population-based surveys indicates that between 10 and 69 percent of those women surveyed reported at least an incidence in which they were physically assaulted by their partners. Violence against intimate partners occurs in all countries, irrespective of social, economic, religious or cultural group (Heise & Garcia-Moreno, 2002). The United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of violence against women as an acknowledgement of the international recognition that violence against women is discriminatory and violates their human rights. According to Kofi Annan, a former Secretary General of the United Nations, "violence against women is perhaps the most

shameful human rights violation. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development, and peace".

Globally, intimate partner violence is a very worrisome issue. Its incidence is more disturbing in developing counties where poverty, unemployment, harsh conditions of life, lack of protective legal framework, adherence to andocentric religions, and cultural practices contribute to more violence in the society. In these cultures too, there are no pretentions of gender equality nor do most women doubt their subordinate status in their relations with men. Violence here thrives unreported. Of course, in a society that is predominantly rural and remote from modernity, where does one report to? Cultural virtues demanding that you do not subject your domestic affair to public discussion keep women from even discussing their ordeals. Igbo adage says that "it is the house mouse that told the bush mouse that its mother smelled".

Whether the abusive violence is reported or not, women suffer the following types of abusive violence:

i) *Physical Violence*: This involves using physical force that is capable of harming or intimidating her. Such physical force includes beating, slapping, flogging, choking, kicking and clubbing.

ii) *Psychological Violence*: Involves persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection meted out on women by intimate partners. It involves the emotional trauma women experience in the hands of intimate partners which results from the humiliation, embarrassment, isolation, constant criticism, verbal abuse, and telling the woman that she is unwanted, unloved and unaccepted.

iii) *Sexual Violence*: This may take any such form as forcing one's intimate partner to engage in sex against her will; instigating abusive sexual acts on one's intimate partner, and other such sexual activities which the woman does not comprehend or intentionally consent to.

iv) *Threats of Violence***:** This form of violence involves threats of physical or sexual violence with words, gestures, or weapons in ways that communicate intent to harm one's intimate partner (Saltman, Fanslow, McMahon & Shelly, 2002).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to (i) ascertain the prevalence of the incidence of intimate partner violence in marticlan societies; (ii) to compare the types and nature of intimate partner violence in Edda with what emerges from literature (iii) to find out why victims of intimate partner

violence stay on in the violent relationship, (iv) to find out the factors that restrain partners from violence, and (v) to suggest ways of reducing the incidence of intimate partner violence in matriclan societies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing on the dynamics of intimate partner violence, Rennison and Welchans (2000) observe that it is more common for men to abuse their female partners than to be abused. According to the authors, data indicate that 85 percent of those victimized by intimate partner violence are women. In 1999, the rates per 1000 women and men were 7.7 and 1.5, respectively. Research shows that both men and women in marital and premarital relationships engage in violent behaviour but the motivations are different for each. For women, the use of violence is most often associated with acts of self-defence, reaction to violent situations, or retaliations for abuse perpetrated against them (Flynn, 1990). Males, on the other hand, are more likely to inflict violence to intimidate their partners or exercise control over them. The report of the World Health Organization (2002) shows that, the triggers of violence in intimate relationships are similar in all parts of the world. According to the report, trigger events include such things as "disobeying or arguing with the man, questioning him about money or girlfriends, not having food ready on time, and not caring adequately for the children or the home, refusing to have sex and the man suspecting the woman of infidelity.

According Dubois and Miley (2010), violence is a means of acquiring power and control. Perpetrators draw on strategies of humiliation, intimidation, isolation, guilt, economic dependency, coercion and threats to magnify their own power and control and to diminish their partners' power and control.

Walker (1984) asserts that spousal battering often unfolds in a predictable circle. Violence between intimate partners always gets worse although there may be plateaus and even temporary reversals during periods of legal or extra-legal and psychological interventions. Initially, there is a period of rising tensions, a time when women think they have control over the abuse they believe that by catering to their partners they can slow down abusive incidents, whereas refusing to meet their partner's demands precipitates abuse. Inevitably, the abuse is an explosion of violence or an acute incident of battering.

According to Lindsey and Beach (2004), the view of the family as a safe and loving haven is in stark contrast to the dramatic increase in domestic violence that makes the family home of one of the most lethal environments. Privacy of the family and the reluctance of the police to get involved in family disputes make it difficult to get accurate statistics on all forms of family violence and abuse. According to the authors, both men and women assault one another in

marriage, and mutual abuse is more common than either alone. However, the consequences to women are more lethal. While domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women, wife battering is the most common and most underreported of all crimes including rape (Gelles & Straus 1995, Dobash, Wilson & Daly 2000). According to Thomas-Lester (1995) and Hague and Malos (1999), one third of all women who are murdered die at the hands of boyfriends or husbands. A woman's risk increases if she threatens to leave, files for divorce, or calls the police, although physical attack will most likely continue if she stays. Half of all homeless women and children are fleeing domestic violence.

Writing on why women remain in violent relationships, Walker (1989) posits that a reduction of tension following the outburst of violence reinforces the physically abusive behaviour. Loving contrition or simply a time of no tension characterizes the third phase. Either factor reinforces women remaining in violent relationship. Learned helplessness, powerlessness, and low self-esteem decrease the likelihood that women will live their spouses (Walker, 1998; Dubois & Miley 2010). Typically, women develop skills that minimize their pain: Denial, dissociation, and splitting enable them to remain and survive.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The first theory used for understanding the work is the **conflict theory**, Conflict theory originally reflects Marxian ideas about class conflict and the relationship between the exploiters and exploited. Marx's collaborator, Frederick Engels, extended these ideas to the family. According to Engels (1942), after the introduction of private property and capitalism, a woman's domestic labour was less valued compared to the household need provided by men. Women are therefore subordinate to men in the autocracy of the household and can never be emancipated until they can take part in paid production, with domestic work taking insignificant amount of time ((Lindsey & Beach, 2004; Shelton & Firestone, 1989). This super ordinate position of men added to traditional expectations of how men should behave and the biological advantage of stronger physique lead to maltreatment of women physically, psychologically and sexually.

The social exchange theory, developed by contemporary sociologists, George Homans and Peter Blau (1964), posits that social interaction is guided by what each person stands to gain or lose from the interaction. In the institution of marriage and family, both the interaction and exchange viewpoints focus on the individual experience of family life. In matriclan societies (which are also patriarchal) women who suffer intimate partner violence consider some factors which constrain them to remain in the violent relationship instead of leaving. When the benefits and advantages are considered to outweigh the pains of violence, they are likely to remain in the violent relationship. In this society cultural constraints dictate or guide the elements of exchange.

METHODS

The design used for this study is the survey design. Survey design enabled the collection of data using representative sample from the study population. The scope of this study was to study the incidence of intimate partner violence and to find out reasons why women in matriclan societies remain in abusive and violent relationships. A sample size of 650 (all married women) was used for this study. This sample size was gotten from the population using the multistage cluster sampling and systematic random sampling techniques. Each of the seven traditional autonomous communities formed a cluster from which the samples were taken. Two major instruments were used for data collection. The first was questionnaires which were used to elicit information from the 650 respondents. One of the questionnaires items was "can you describe yourself as a regular victim of intimate partner violence?" "If yes, will you oblige to participate in our focus group discussion?" "If yes, please include your phone number". The second instrument was focus group discussion (FGD). Discussants were gotten through the above method and through purposive or judgmental method which enabled the selection of participants adjudged to have adequate knowledge of the issue under discussion. Data gotten from the questionnaires were analyzed using the statistical package for the social sciences, while coding, transcription and content analysis were used for the analysis of data gotten through focus group discussions.

STUDY AREA

This study was conducted in Edda, Afikpo South Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Edda, with a population of about 310, 000 is located in southernmost part of Ebonyi State senatorial zone. Edda is bounded in the south by Cross River State, in the north by Ohaozara, in the east by Afikpo North, and in the west by Ivo. Edda is one of the few clans in Igbo of Nigeria that practice matrilineal system of kinship (others are Ohafia, Afikpo, Nkporo, and Abiriba). The Edda are Igbo and speak Igbo in their peculiar dialect. The people of Edda are mainly agrarian and produce such crops as yam, cassava, grains, oil palm and vegetables using simple tools. Farm work here is very enervating as the topography is difficult and the land rocky. Owing to the difficult terrain, farmers carry their loads on their head and consequently, the whole process is subsistent. Due to the presence of a local council, white collar job is also an increasing engagement, with local political office holders also of increasing proportion. Many are also traders and each day in four days is set aside as market day where no one is permitted to go to farm. Matrilineal kinship system in Edda implies that the family names are traced through the mother's line. Daughters of female kins usually inherit traditional family property but the inherited property must be in the custody of sons of the female kins. Here kindred exogamy is a strong cultural practice. Cultural norm forbids men from marrying within their kindred no matter where the kinswoman is. For example, there are many kindreds - *Uma, Anuma, Mgberenwa,*

Ekworo, Ibe udu, Amala, Enyi and many more. It, therefore, means that a man from Uma is cultural forbidden from marrying a woman from *Uma* even if the said woman is from a clan hundreds of kilometers away. A man may even marry his father's kinswoman because his father is from different kindred. Patrilocality is also a cultural norm in Edda. Men belong to their mothers' kindred but they reside in and inherit their father's compounds. So the fact is that kindred exogamy mandates people to marry outside their kindred. People marry from other kindred thereby producing a network of extended family system. Although intimate partner violence is pervasive, these networks set limits to the rate and intensity of intimate partner violence that occurs in Edda.

RESULTS

The first objective of the study was to determine the prevalence of the incidence of intimate partner violence in Edda matriclan society. Of the 650 respondents, 64 percent (416 of the respondents) reported experiencing one form of intimate partner violence or the other. 29 percent reported having packed out their husband's house in reaction to abuse, and returned.

The second objective was to find out the risk factors for intimate partner violence. Probing into factors that lead to intimate partner violence showed the following: Men want to assert their masculine position in the family; when men perceive that their relations in the family are being mistreated by the wife; drunkenness; inability of the man to provide for the family; when the men believe that the spouse is not submissive; refusal to engage in sex; questioning the man about money and girlfriends; suspicion of infidelity; not giving adequate attention to child welfare; arguing with them even on trivial matters. Of all these triggering events, abusing a step child or a foster child on placement was reported as the important factor contributing to violent attach. Insubordination and accusing a man of using his money for "womanizing" and drinking were also pointed out as serious contributors to intimate partner violence. Another was the issue of the woman being suspected of infidelity.

The third objective was to compare the nature and types of intimate partner violence with what emerges from literature. Literature identifies the following as the different types of intimate partner violence: Physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, and threats of violence (Saltman *et al*, 2002). The study shows that physical violence, psychological violence, threats of violence and sexual violence also occur in the study area.

Physical violence manifests in the following forms: Throwing the woman's personal belongings out of the house – "pack your things and go to your father's house", battering, flogging, other forms of beating, locking the woman out of the house, intimidating with physical force. Three

women in the focus group discussion even reported being knelt down on the hard floor for over two hours at a stretch on many occasions.

Psychological violence manifests in the following ways: Refusal to eat anything prepared by the woman; not talking to the woman, including not answering her greetings; humiliation: "you are good for nothing", "your parent didn't train you well"; embarrassment; isolation; constant criticism; comparing the woman with other women; abusing the woman, her parents and relations. According to one of the research participants in the focus group discussion, "It is better for him (the husband) to beat me than to subject me to such emotional trauma".

Threats of violence in Edda matriclan society involves threatening physical violence not only to the woman but also to the children "I will kill you and the children and there will be no consequence", threatening to extend the violence to the woman's relations; threatening to kill the woman and commit suicide, violent gestures, threatening with weapons in ways that convey intent to harm. A discussant reported" he threatened to lock the entire household up in the house and set the house ablaze, I was so afraid because I believed he meant it."

Sexual violence manifests in forcing one's intimate partner to engage in sex against her will, and carrying out punitive actions if the woman refuses to consent to sex. Such punitive actions include making the woman believe he can get sexual pleasure from other women, refusing to provide some necessities as a reaction to her refusal to grant sex, threatening to get a second wife, and telling the woman that her refusal to have sex was a testimony that she was getting sexual satisfaction from another man.

Of the above identified types of intimate partner violence, psychological violence and threat of violence are the most common forms of intimate partner violence. 604 of the respondents, 93 percent, reported experiencing psychological and threat to violence at one time or the other in their wedlock. 416 of the respondents reported being physically abused in one form or the other. The least in the rate of occurrence was sexual abuse. It was also the least reported of all the types of intimate partner violence. Only 156 (24 percent) of the 650respondents reported being sexually abused by their intimate partners.

The fourth objective of the study was to know why female victims of intimate partner violence remain in the abusive violent relationship. The investigation shows that women who suffer abuse, intimate partner violence, endure and remain in the violent relationships because of the following reasons:

- **Fear** *of children living under another woman:* The women understand the pains and abuses children experience who live with step mothers in their fathers houses. The women, therefore, prefer to endure abuse and violence to subjecting their children to abuse by another

woman in their father's houses. 61 per cent of those who said they had experienced violence gave this as one of the major reasons for remaining in the violent relationship.

- **To *maintain the prestige that comes from wedlock*:** An Edda adage says "whether you eat or not there is prestige in wedlock." Women therefore, strive to marry and remain in marriage even if difficulties are encountered. Intimate partner violence is one of such difficulties that are endured in stead of staying without a husband.

- *Fear of stigma leaving may have on female siblings*: Women who suffer abuse and intimate partner violence stay in the violent relationship because they fear that their family will be stigmatized as family that does not maintain a stable relationship. Such stigma affects the opportunity or prospect of female siblings getting married. So, to avoid such stigma they stay on in spite of abuse and violence.

- *The constraints of Christian faith:* In the past few decades, Edda was predominantly traditional with very few embracing the Christian faith. Now a significant proportion of the folks attend church services. Initial zeal and group conformity compel these converts to conform to the teachings and doctrines of the religious leaders. Remaining in marriage '*until death do us part'* is one the doctrines that compel women to stay in marriage in spite of abuse. Perseverance is also taught to be a Christian virtue, as a discussant put it '*those who endure to the end shall be saved*.' Besides these teachings, religious leaders are actively engaged in the business of advising members against going contrary to religious doctrines.

- *To break a family tradition of instability:* Many of the respondents reported that their family members are known for breaking marriage relations. They, therefore, determine to break that tradition of family instability that their kinswomen are known for, and so stay on in spite of abuse and violence by their intimate partners.

- *Hoping that the situation will improve*: They hope that the abusive and violence situation will one day come to an end and relations will improve "It came to pass" "nothing lasts for ever" and "marriage is for good or for worse" are notions that reinforce their stay in abusive situations.

- *Sexual Satisfaction*: Some of the victims of abuse reported enjoying satisfying sexual relations with their violent intimate partners. This may appear a poor compensation for the abuse and violence, but to the respondents it is a strong compelling factor for remaining in the relationship. To them "it is better I stay in the relationship than to pack out and secretly visit him for sexual intercourse."

- *Fear of breaking a family tradition of stable marriage*: The respondents also posited that their families are not known for divorce or breaking away from marriages. They are therefore; constrained to stay since they fear that leaving the relationship might result in unfavourable reaction from their parents and other family members. Some who left returned to their husbands after intervention by kinsmen.

- *Inheritance Concerns***:** Although there is a culturally defined inheritance guidelines, female victims of intimate partner violence fear that leaving the abusive relationship might lead to their children being disinherited by children of another woman, so they stay that their children might inherit what is due to them from their father.
- *Concern about being able to support themselves***:** Many women actually expressed worry about how they could meet their needs if they disengaged from their violent partners. The worry about self-support is made more perplexing by the fact that many of them are never willing to leave their children with their abusive husbands. The problem of providing for themselves and for their children makes them unwilling to leave their abusive husbands.

Other reasons the women gave for not leaving the abusive violent relationship include having an obligation that their children grow up with both parents. A proverb in Igbo says "a dog trained by a woman steals eggs". This means that children brought up by women have bad characters. They also believe that people will blame them for the whole problem. And they feel that men are "like that".

The next objective was to know how female victims of intimate partner violence react to the abusive or violent relationship. About 23% of the respondents said they just endure hoping it would end one day. About 21% fight back; some report to both their family members and in-laws; some run away with the children; some run away without the children; some stay without granting sexual gratification; some higher relations to beat the man up; some refuse to cook; some cry and shout to attract the attention and pity of neighbours; and some pack their things and leave.

The last objective was to suggest ways intimate partner violence can be reduced in matrilineal societies. Respondents made the following suggestions:

i) Exhortation, and this involves elders and significant others strongly urging and advising both to behave peaceably toward each other.
ii) Community action which involves the community using social control measures to regulate the behaviour of couples.
iii) Women empowerment: women should be empowered economically, politically, and socially.
iv) Legislation and law enforcement: making laws against violence against women will help in fighting intimate partner violence. It is not enough to make such laws, they should of necessity be enforced.
v) Family intervention: marriage in traditional societies is not between two persons. It is between families. Families should therefore see it as an obligation to control misbehaving partner in a marriage.

DISCUSSION

Intimate partner violence is pervasive in matriclan societies just as it is in other societies (DuBois & Miley, 2010; Lindsey & Beach, 2004). About 64 percent of the respondents reported experiencing one form of partner violence or another. The high rate or intimate partner violence in the study area is understandable since in traditional societies there is still obvious paternity and male dominance in most spheres of life.

Some of the risk factors to intimate partner violence mentioned by respondents are peculiar to traditional societies. For example in matriclan societies, men want to assert their masculinity and dominance. For example, a participant in focus group discussion pointed out that the abusive relationship was actually triggered off by the husband's relations who were accusing him of not being man enough or in control of events in his family. Another major factor was the presence of a foster child in the family, especially when the child is related to the husband. When the man perceives that the foster child is suffering maltreatment in the hands of the wife he might in reaction attack the wife physically. About 27 percent of the respondent reported that this reason was responsible for their violent relationship. Of course women are the most important abusers of children (DuBois & Miley, 2010). Frustration arising from the man's inability to provide for the family also leads to violence. This is in harmony with (Macionis, 2010) who notes that people in the lower class experience more violence than those in the upper class. Drunkenness and use of other hard drugs are also factors for violence abuse. Seventeen percent of the respondents reported that their husbands beat them when they are drunk or are under the influence of hard drugs like marijuana, cocaine or heroin. The study also shows that men use physical violence or other forms of violence to bring the wives to submissiveness. In traditional societies women are not seen to be equal to men and so are expected to be submissive to their husbands. Suspicion of infidelity by either or both of the spouses may lead to violence against intimate partners. This suspicion leads to asking the man questions about money or about girl friends. These are antagonizing issues and often lead to intimate partner violence, as a respondent posited "my husband is a womanizer and spends money on those women, and I cannot stop making trouble until he stops it." Another factor identified in the study was a woman's inability to take proper care of the children. Men assume that it is responsibility of wives to take care of the children and may become violent when women are found wanting in this respect. The refusal of wife to grant sexual gratification to her husband may also lead to violence. This could lead to sexual violence or verbal violence, emotional abuse or withholding of favours from the woman.

One of the objectives of the study was to compare what emerges from literature on this issue with our findings. Saltman and his colleagues (2002) identify the following as the different types

of intimate partner violence: physical violence, psychological violence, threats of violence, and sexual violence. These forms of intimate partner violence were also found in the study area but their manifestations are peculiar to the society in which they occur. For instance, physical violence manifests in beating, flogging, battering, throwing the woman's personal belongings out of the house, locking the woman out of the house, kneeling the woman down. Some of these hardly occur in developed societies. Psychological violence manifests in the forms of refusal to eat anything prepared by the woman, not talking to the woman including not answering her greetings, humiliating vituperations like "you are good for nothing", "Your parents did not train you well", embarrassing the woman, isolation, constant criticism, and comparing the woman to other women. According to the study, some of these verbal abuses are more painful than physical attack. Threat of violence in the study area involves threatening physical violence against the woman and even the children "I will kill you and the children and there will be no consequence; threatening to kill the woman and commit suicide; threatening with gestures and dangerous weapons. A discussant reported" he threatened to lock up the entire house and set it ablaze, I was so afraid because I believed that he meant it. The threats of harm even to the children are directed at the wife because in matriclan societies children are traditionally kins of the woman, not of the man (Obasi, 2000; Akanu, 2010).

Sometimes women are not disposed to willingly grant sexual gratification to their husbands, and this leads to sexual violence. Sexual violence involves forcing ones intimate partner to engage in sex against her will; carrying out punitive actions if a woman refuses to engage in sex. Such action may include locking the woman inside the house: "You cannot go out unless you consent; raping the woman, beating her, threatening to go and bring another woman into the house or accusing her of getting her sexual gratification from another man which explains why she refuses to consent to you.

The study shows that not many men actually engage in physically beating their wives but many do worse things than physical battering. These things include psychological violence and threats of violence discussed above. Sexual violence is the least in occurrence of the different types of intimate partner violence..

Concerning the fourth objective which is to know why female victims of intimate partner violence remain in the abusive violent relationship in matriclan societies, fear of children living under another woman, to maintain the prestige that comes from wedlock, fear of stigma leaving may have on female siblings, and constraints of the Christian faith, were the most important reasons adduced by respondents. These reasons are really peculiar to traditional societies compared to what emerges from Western Literature (Lindsey & Beach, 2004; DuBois & Miley, 2010). Other reasons why women remain in the violence relationship include to break a family

tradition of instability, fear of breaking a family tradition of stable marriage, inheritance concerns. These reasons are also peculiar to traditional societies (Akanu, 2010; Obasi, 2000).

The next objective was to know how female victims react to the intimate partner violence. Findings show that they react in different ways and these ways are not mutually exclusive. They may react in a combination of ways. Some of them (23%) endure without even complaining. A discussant reported "I just endure, I do not even complain because if I report to relations they blame me of not knowing how to manage my husband, but the whole thing will end one day".' I fight back' was the report given by 21 percent of the respondents. "in my own case I fight back, I know if he kills me he will tell them he just found me lying on the floor, or some times after the violence, when he relaxes I hit him with a club and run away", running away with the children, running away without the children, refusal to grant sexual gratification, refusing to cook, crying and shouting to attack the attention and pity of neighbours are other ways female victims react to violence. Some reported that they react to violent abuse by bringing their own male relations beat the abusive husband "to let him know that I also have relations who can be violent". Some break traditional practice and report to law enforcement agency like the police. When situations are not improving, some pack their things and leave either to husband's relations (for those who want to return) or to their own paternal house (for those are less willing to return). Those who run away without the children said "so that he will experience the task of looking after the children and then know that I also am important and that he goes to work and I stay at home is only a division of labour. Let him nurse them, clean their mess, feed them, cook and be disturbed by their cries and he will know I fill a gap in the family".

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research participants in this study made copious recommendations on how to reduce the incidence of intimate partner violence. Below are some of the recommendations:

i) **Exhortation**: Many participants in this research believe urging violent partners strongly and earnestly against violence will be very effective in reducing abuse and violence. When friends, elders, parents and relations exhort violent partners consistently and without ambivalence it is likely to produce effect. Those who exhort should themselves not be abusers.

ii) **Community Action**: Some communities have set up action committees on violence, and this has worked very effectively in controlling violent behaviours. So it is strongly recommended that actions committees be set up in village and communities to regulate behaviors and sanction abusive and violent intimate partners.

iii) **Victims Assistance Programmes**: Edda and most of these matrilineal societies are highly traditional. Family land is held in custody by eldest males. Women lack

empowerment. One compelling reason for remaining in abusive and violent relationships is the fear about being able to support oneself. If victims' assistance programmes are established to assist victims of intimate partner violence many will not remain in such dehumanizing relationships. Moreover when the violent partners perceive that communities are assisting the victims of violence, they will be constrained to have attitudinal chance, knowing that the women could leave anytime.

iv) **Legislation and law Enforcement**: In 2004, the office of the Governor or Ebonyi state established the family care programme. Participants in this research strongly recommend that such programmes should be strengthened. There should be funding for emergency shelters, transitional housing, fund for civil and legal services to women who are victims of domestic sexual violence.

v) **Family intervention:** Families should work together to reduce or if possible eradicate violence. In-laws should act as a restraining force on the behaviours of couples. Since marriage in matrilineal societies is between families, not individuals, families have roles to play in ensuring stability.

vi) **Empowerment:** Many women who stay in an abusive relationship believe the situation is hopeless, they won't make a difference, or that they lack the ability and resources to make a change. It is recommended that female victims of abuse and intimate partner violence be empowered. Empowerment involves increasing personal, interpersonal or political power so that individuals, families, and communities can take action to improve their situation. When people experience empowerment, they feel effective, conclude that they are competent, and perceive that they have power and control over their lives. Many of the research participants insinuated that even if they considered leaving the abusive relationship, they would be constrained by lack of power and the wherewithal to sustain themselves.

CONCLUSION

Intimate partner violence is indeed a family aberration that knows no geographical boundary. It occurs in high income societies like America, Japan, Britain, and Germany. It occurs in both modern and traditional societies. It occurs in both patrilineal and matrilineal societies. The nature and types of intimate partner violence found in the area of this study -Edda- are similar to those that occur in western societies which emerge in literature. However, reasons or factors that make victims of intimate partner violence stay in the abusive relationship vary. In matrilineal societies there are consideration on the effect leaving will have on yet-to-marry female siblings; family traditions are considered, cultural practices influence behaviour and the issue of inheritance is important. Most of these are not considered in modern societies. Intervention strategies should be guided by these peculiar cultural facts. It is hoped that intervention based on the above

recommendations will have far reaching implications on intimate partner violence in matriclan societies.

The two theories used in this research proved relevant in understanding this research.

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