

Domestic Violence in Nigeria: A Case of Concern for Guidance Counsellors

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Abstract

The realization and actualization of national peace is a huge and demanding task; but its relevance cannot be underestimated. It is unrealistic to assume that national peace can be achieved without interfering in the crisis that rock the foundation of society, which is the family. Unstable homes cannot guarantee a peaceful country. Domestic Violence has been a social problem and it impedes the peace and serenity of the family. No doubt violence is an integral part of the human society, but managing it has been very challenging. This paper x-rays the problem of domestic violence in our society as seen in other climes, while also emphasizing the huge role guidance counselors have to play on both victims, and perpetrators to ameliorate its growth in Nigeria. In arriving at the conclusion of this work, the research analyses quantitative research materials available and implored a qualitative analysis to draw its conclusion.

Key Words: Domestic Violence, Divorce, Guidance Counselling, Peace, Development

1.0 Introduction

The desire of any society to embrace peace for the well-being of the state cannot be taken for granted. Today, our society is in dire need of peace for progress and integral development; and this cannot be achieved without the value of family life. The value of family life is very important because of the role the family plays in the stabilization of the state and the progress of humanity. Philosophers like Aristotle and Hegel never took for granted the place of the family in the society. For these philosophers, the family is the foundation in which the universalized rule of law is validated according to the political structure of the 'Polis' or 'State' itself. This composite whole or structure of society (Ancient Polis/Modern State) is the political end of humanity for both philosophers, which in turn find its primordial beginning in the family (Jarvis, 2011). This is the very reason William Bennett opines that the family is the

nucleus of civilization and the basic unit of society (2012). Aristotle wrote that the family is nature's established association for the supply of mankind's everyday wants (Mukherjee S. & Ramaswamy, 2011). As such, the institution of the family is the first form of community and government.

It is in the light of this background this paper looks at a very vital issue that threatens the existence of the family today in our contemporary society (Domestic Violence). So many divorces today or battered families are products of domestic violence. It is a topical issue in the front pages of our newspapers, Instagram, Facebook and other social and electronic media platforms. Divorce is now an easy path for victims of domestic violence. This paper makes an attempt to interrogate divorce if it can in any way be a means of solving the problem of domestic violence in the family, should it be the only solution one thinks he / she has. The paper proposes a more proactive guidance counseling services to serve as intervention for this menace in a society where guidance counseling services have been neglected, and considered of no value in a society in dire need of its usage to help enhance family values and stability for a better and peaceful co-existence of our society. Lastly, this paper discusses domestic violence within the context of marriage and family considering the vagueness the term now applies.

2.0 Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior in which one intimate partner uses physical violence, coercion, threats, intimidation, isolation, and emotional, sexual, or economic abuse to control the other partner in a relationship. It is sometimes called battering, relationship abuse, or intimate partner violence. It is a crime that can include physical abuse, emotional abuse, economic abuse and sexual abuse (Safe Horizon, 2007). Domestic Violence may include not only the intimate partner relationships of spousal, live-in partners and dating relationships, also familial, elder and child abuse may be present in a violent home (*National Coalition against Domestic Violence, 2005*). For the sake of this paper, domestic violence shall be defined and termed as Family Domestic Violence (FDV), physical assault, battering and threat to the existence of a partner in marriage that is legal, customarily and sacramentally valid (and in some cases cohabitation) that can cause serious harm on the victim (a victim can either be a man or a woman). It is termed Family Domestic Violence, because domestic violence can take place anywhere like the workplace, religious organizations, schools etc. It can take many forms, including physical aggression or assault (hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, restraining, slapping, throwing objects, battery) or threats thereof; sexual abuse; controlling or domineering etc. So many definitions abound but for the sake of this paper we shall limit ourselves to the crux of the definitions stated in this work.

3.0 Types of Domestic Violence

When the general public think about 'domestic violence', they usually think in terms of physical assaults that result in visible injuries to the victims. Of course, it is the injury that reflects the actual evidence that one is a victim of domestic violence that could as well be a threat to life. But it is important to look at the other dimensions of domestic violence, which could take a psychological and emotional dimension. This will enlighten to the devastating effects of other domestic violence which could sometimes be triggers to the physical injury that leaves evidences and sometimes death of a partner. It is important to note that not all domestic violence is the same. Differences in frequency, severity, purpose, and outcome are all significant. The types of domestic violence stated in this paper include, but are not limited to the following:

- a. **Physical Abuse:** Physical abuse is any physical aggressive behavior, withholding of physical needs, indirect physical harmful behaviour, or threat of physical abuse. This may include; hitting, kicking, biting, slapping, shaking, pushing, pulling, punching, choking, beating, scratching, pinching, pulling hair, stabbing, shooting, drowning, burning, hitting with an object, threatening with a weapon, or threatening to physically assault. On the other hand, withholding of physical needs including interruption of sleep or meals, denying of money, food, transportation, or help if sick or injured, locking victim into or out of the house, refusing to give or rationing necessities. More so, abusing, injuring or threatening to injure others like children, pets or special property. Forcible physical restraint against her will, being trapped in a room or having her/his exit blocked, being held down. The batterer hits or kick walls, doors, or other inanimate objects during an argument, throwing things in anger, destruction of property and holding the victim hostage.
- b. **Sexual Abuse:** Sexual abuse is using sex in an exploitative fashion or forcing sex on another person. Having consented sexual activity in the past does not indicate current consent. Sexual abuse may involve both verbal and physical behavior. This may include, but not limited to: using force, coercion, guilt, or manipulation or not considering the victim's desire to have sex. This may include making her have sex with others, have unwanted sexual experience, or be involuntarily involved in prostitution. It could also mean exploiting a victim who is unable to make an informed decision about involvement in sexual activity because of being asleep, intoxicated, drugged, disabled, too young, too old, or dependent upon or afraid of the perpetrator. Also, it includes laughing or making fun of another's sexuality or body, making offensive statements, insulting, or name-calling in relation to the victim's sexual preference/behavior. In addition is the making of contact with the victim in any non-consensual way, including unwanted penetration (oral, anal,

or vaginal) or touching (stroking, kissing, licking, sucking or using objects) on any part of the victim's body. It could also be exhibiting excessive jealousy resulting in false accusations of infidelity and controlling behaviors¹ to limit the victim's contact with the outside world; and having affairs with other people and using that information to taunt the victim. Finally, withholding sex from the victim as a control mechanism.

- c. **Verbal Abuse:** Coercion, Threats, and Blame: Verbal abuse is any abusive language used to denigrate, embarrass or threaten the victim. This may include but is not limited to: threatening to hurt or kill the victim or her children, family, pets, property or reputation. This also involves name calling (ugly bitch, whore, stupid, idiot, useless etc.). It could also involve telling a victim he/she is unattractive or undesirable; yelling, screaming, rampaging, terrorizing or refusing to talk.
- d. **Economic Abuse:** Financial abuse is a way to control the victim through manipulation of economic resources. This may include, but not limited to: controlling the family income and either not allowing the victim access to money or rigidly limiting her access to family funds. This may also include from keeping financial secrets to hidden accounts, putting the victim on an allowance or allowing her no say in how money is spent, or making her/his turn paycheck over to him/her. Causing the victim to lose a job or preventing her/him from taking a job. He can make her/him lose her/him job by making her/him late for work, refusing to provide transportation to work or by calling/harassing/calling her/him at work. Lastly, spending money for necessities (food, rent, utilities) on nonessential items (drugs, alcohol, stereo equipment, hobbies).

4.0 Domestic Violence: The Family Context

Domestic violence as situated within the context of the family as Family Domestic Violence is a response to the prevailing circumstances that have resulted to divorce in marriages in our society. It is very important to note that being victims of domestic violence within the family is not just about sex and gender. It is both an issue for both the victim and perpetrator. There are various issues that need to be fundamentally tackled in the family and which are often neglected and taken for granted. Mike Fitzpatrick (2006) also observes this when he opines that the discussion of domestic violence, now relabeled 'intimate partner violence' that has assumed such prominence suffers from lack of historical and sociological perspectives. He therefore analyses domestic violence within the family as a product of low self-esteem and post-traumatic stress syndrome, which according to him are taken at face value instead of being understood as constructed categories that provide a framework for the reinterpretation of personal experience at a particular historical moment. It is

now widely accepted that diverse forms of intimidation and exploitation are commonplace – if – not universal in relationships between sexual partners and most cases FDV (Fitzpatrick, 2006). This makes the husband and wife both potential victim and perpetrator. Most times it is not possible for one person to be the perpetrator; and of course, when the victim becomes perpetually a victim and the perpetrator becomes a perpetual one, then it becomes an abnormal situation and will need a drastic attention in improving the quality of human relationship as a social project. This is the very reason it is dangerous to treat domestic violence from a female (wife) angle and neglect the male (husband) dimension to it. Both male and female (husband and wife) need help. In *Asking Men About Domestic Violence and Abuse In a Family Medicine Context: Help Seeking and Views on the General Practitioners Role*, (Morgan et. Al., 2014) suggests that health-care practitioners in general, and family doctors in particular, have a role in asking male patients about the experience or perpetration of domestic abuse and they (health-care practitioners need training to do so effectively and safely. As such, if we must understand the dynamics of FDV and the need for it to be treated on the basis of the fact that both perpetrators and victims need help, then it will be a pathway to ameliorating the standard of family identity and safeguarding marriage as an institution and the establishment of peace in our society.

Family Domestic Violence amongst parents is the most frequently reported form of trauma for children (Meltzer, 2009). In the United Kingdom, 24% of those aged 18 to 24 reported that they experienced domestic violence and abuse during childhood. Around 3% of those aged fewer than 17 reported exposures to it in the past 12 months (Radford et. al., 2011). FDV has a devastating effect on children and the entire household which is later projected in the wider society. Children are most times affected through FDV which exposes them to a regime of intimidation and control. Nevertheless, violence differs by children's developmental age. Irrespective of what their age is, it impacts on a child's mental, emotional and psychological health and their social and educational development. It also affects their likelihood of experiencing or becoming perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse as adults, as well as exposing them directly to physical harm and also making some of them become deviant in the society. Efforts to understand children's experiences are complicated by the difficulties of isolating the impacts of FDV from other detrimental factors, such as poverty, parental substance abuse, family dysfunction, mental ill-health and experiences of discrimination and marginalization (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015).

There is no doubt women are victims more of physical violence; just as cases of most men are underreported. In Nigeria presently, women have suffered brutality and injuries and in some cases death as a result of FDV. The question

one may ask is, is it normal for a man to keep beating a woman brutally to the point of death knowing that she is undergoing so much pains as a result of his act against her? Is it even normal for a man to kill intentionally the woman he claims to love? Why do men act brutally? When a man beats up his wife is it with the intention of killing her? In as much as these questions are necessary it will in no way justify the act of FDV from a male dominated society; but these questions should be put us in the right perspective that perpetrators of this nature need serious help. This will also be an appropriate scenario for women who are perpetrators. No doubt there are cases where women have displayed such tendencies or even brutally beaten their husbands to the point of death even by a mere instrumental cause of an object used against the man. This is the very reason divorce will not be a first option for FDV as proposed by this paper because of the spiral effect of divorce too.

5.0 Divorce On the Grounds of Domestic Violence: Matters Arising

It is very challenging getting materials that would not support divorce on the grounds of FDV. This is as a result to life threatening situations of violence from one partner to the other and this paper acknowledges this perspective. The question posed here will be, has divorce really solved the problem of FDV or has it worsened the situation? Will a divorced man or woman not marry again? How certain is the character of the next partner? In a situation where a woman files a divorce against her husband and succeeds and eventually remarries and her current husband sees her as a perpetrator and divorces her because he could not tolerate her as well, what happens again to her? Will she go remarry? It is also important for us to understand that FDV is very vague and dynamic and can be treated relatively. FDV for B might not be the same for X and what it is for F might not be the same for R. This calls for a serious philosophical interrogation and psychological analysis when confronted with issues of FDV. The knowledge of the fact that everyone has a potential capacity to be perpetrator and victim will be the beginning of helping couples to understand themselves better.

Andy Gibson a law maker in the United States of America does not agree that divorce is a way out of domestic violence. He went further to say in a plenary session debate that law makers should rather look for laws to strengthen marriages and family values rather than creating more laws for divorce in the case of FDV. He asserts that Mississippi has laws already relating to divorce and domestic violence and concludes that divorce is a tragic event in the life of any couple. Sometimes it is necessary and/or unavoidable, and especially so in cases of domestic abuse. Victims of cruel and inhuman treatment should get out. But Mississippi does not need another bill to say what the law already says (Pender, 2017).

In Nigeria, what have we put on ground to build more formidable policies to strengthen the family; rather than making divorce an easy way out of domestic violence knowing fully well that some spouse can pretend under the auspices of domestic violence to run away from family responsibilities? How are evidences of domestic violence measured to determine one's culpability? No doubt, the Nigerian constitution protects every Nigerian citizen from violence of any form, how possible have these laws been enforced for the protection of the victims of FDV irrespective of sex and gender? Respect for human dignity is a veritable approach in protecting victims of FDV irrespective of sex, gender, age and religion (Timothy & Noel, 2017).

6.0 The Effect of Divorce on Family and Society

The effects of divorce on families are more likely to be negative and destructive than positive. Every individual of the family will suffer short and long term effects and this include children, teens, spouses, parents and the extended family. According to Ayers Philip, divorce impacts the careers of people and the well-being of society (2000). The question that rises here in relation to divorce and how it has a negative and long term consequences will be, why would parents seek to divorce as a last option and not the healing of the marriage? What is the value people place on marriage and family today in our contemporary society?

Gordon Berlin in *Effect of Marriage and Divorce on Families and Children*, concludes thus:

Children who grow up in an intact, a two-parent family with both biological parents present do better on a wide range of outcomes than children who grow up in a single – parent family. Single parenthood is not the only, nor even the most important, cause of the higher rates of school dropout, teenage pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, or other negative outcomes we see; but it does not contribute independently to these problems. Neither does single parenthood guarantee that children will not succeed; many, if not most, children who grow up in a single-parent household do succeed (2005, p. 23).

It is not proper to throw away the baby with the bathing water but at the same it is better to give priority to family life for a more stable society. In the 1980s, psychologists began producing evidence that divorce among middle class families was harmful to children (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980). In a follow up research and renewed interest in the findings of the 80s, the significant relationship between poverty and single parenthood soon emerged, and the conclusion was that family structure is a matter of urgent concern and attention for the well-being of the society (Furstenberg and Cherlin, 1994).

Research comparing children of divorced parents to children with both parents' shows: Children from divorced homes suffer academically. They experience high levels of behavioral problem. Modern World, the sanctity of marriage and the family in relation to the stability of society is expressed thus:

Hence by that human act whereby spouses mutually bestow and accept each other, a relationship arises which by divine will and in the eyes of society too is a lasting one. For the good of the spouses and their off-springs as well as of society, the existence of the sacred bond no longer depends on human decisions alone ... all of these have a very decisive bearing on the continuation of the human race, on the personal development and eternal destiny of the individual members of a family, and on the dignity, stability, peace and prosperity of the family itself and of human society as a whole (no. 47).

7.0 Guidance Counseling Practice in Nigeria

Historically, guidance in Nigeria started in 1959 when a group of Irish Reverend Sisters from the Roman Catholic Mission at St. Theresa's College Oke-Ado near Ibadan invited twenty different professionals to give occupational information to their graduating students. The professionals were trained counselors but they were used to deliver career talks to students on their various jobs. Fortunately, all the graduating students who applied for jobs were employed. The career talks delivered by the professionals became an annual event. In 1961, these professionals founded the Ibadan Career Council (I.C.C) and later expanded its activities to other parts of the Country. In 1962 the government sent a delegate from the education sector to Sweden, France and United States of America to examine the educational practices that might improve education. In these Countries the officials recommended that each school must have at least one graduate officer.

In 1963, Harvard and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) introduced modern guidance in Comprehensive High School, Aiyetoro, Ogun State. The Federal Ministry of Education organized a seminar on guidance and counseling testing in Lagos in 1964, and in the same year, a 'child guidance clinic' was established in Lagos by the Federal Ministry of Education and supervised by the Roman Catholic Mission. Thirdly, a vocational "Guidance Bureau" was also opened to run workshops for teachers. The ICC changed its name to Higher Career Council (HCC) to reflect its national outlook. The council's main aims and objective were to organize workshops for career masters. It also published a journal known as "careers". A professional association of counselors emerged in 1976 with Professor Olu Makinde as the pioneer president of the counseling association as a profession and as

practitioners. The association published a journal called; “The Counselor” and all registered members of Counseling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) are certificated by the association. In 1977 the Federal Government of Nigeria officially recognized and encouraged the establishment of functional guidance and counseling in the National Policy Education. Guidance and counseling in Nigeria today has gone beyond the academic arena to rather the general aspect of human association and behavior with the basic aim of achieving the following goals:

- i. Achievement of Positive Mental Health
- ii. Resolution of Problems
- iii. Improving Personal Effectiveness
- iv. Aiding proper Decision – Making
- v. Modification of Behaviour

With the huge task of achieving these goals, counseling practice in Nigeria has been faced with problems which have hindered its success. These problems include:

- * Inadequate qualified Counselors
- * Unhealthy Perception of the Counselor and Its Roles by the Public
- * Inadequate Guidance Facilities
- * Inadequate Psychological Tests
- * The silence of victims (in the case of domestic violence)
- * Over Loading of Counselors with other Responsibilities
- * Lack of Information Materials

The need to solve social problems in the Nigerian society demands a lot of options, and counseling is one important option. Certain deviant behaviors are psychological rather than socio-cultural, and this should be emphasized. People should be made to understand that adults can change the social norms that justify some of their deviant behaviors.

8.0 Pre-Marital Clinical Counseling and Post Marriage Guidance Counseling

FDV and domestic abuse in general is a complex issue that needs sensitive handling by a range of health and social care professionals. Domestic violence and abuse is a major public health problem. There is a link between domestic violence, physical and mental health and child well-being. In fact, health care professionals are often the first people victims of domestic violence should report to; because the initial reaction of that person and the follow up can have a

profound effect. A recent review of international literature on abuse/violence identifies a wide range of associated physical, neurological, psychological and psychogenic health problems (Power, 2004).

In trying to understand the dynamics of divorce and to know if really most divorce couples are very much aware that perpetrators and victims of domestic violence will constantly need the assistance of health and social care professionals; just as we have family medical doctors, spiritual directors (Clergy men and professed Sisters) so is a family entitled to health and social care professionals. Establishing a relationship with a therapist should be like selecting your family physician. Often, the clergy and other officials offer these services, but it can still be beneficial to receive these services with a psychologist or someone trained in marital dynamics. Unfortunately, none of these couples are aware of the need to have access to a guidance counselor or a clinical psychologist or even a social care professional as interventions but seek divorce as the best way out. Looking at their countenance, one could see an expression of disappointment not to have explored these avenues to have a stable family life. Due to the extent and prevalence of violence in the family, counselors and therapists are encouraged to assess every client of domestic violence (both perpetrators and victims). In fact, if the clinician is seeing a couple for couple's counseling, this assessment should be conducted with each individual privately during the initial interview, in order to increase the victim's sense of safety in disclosing any violence in the relationship (Lawson, 2003). No doubt, the victims and perpetrators of FDV have their autonomy and social care professionals should allow them make their own decisions as regards the future of the marriage but above all the welfare of the client is of utmost importance but the interventions are very necessary for the protection of family life.

Prevention they say is better than cure and this underscores premarital – clinical psychological test for couples before they get into marriage. It is very much appropriate for couples to begin to know the tendencies in themselves and to have a grip of their psychological pre-dispositions so as to be aware of their behaviors and why they act the way they do. This will enable them make an informed decision as to getting married and understanding who they are getting married to.

Premarital counseling is a type of therapy that helps couples prepare for marriage. Premarital counseling can help ensure that you and your partner have a strong, healthy relationship – giving you a better chance for a satisfying marriage. Premarital counseling can also help you identify weaknesses that could become problems during marriage. However, any couple can benefit from premarital counseling, it can help couples who are about to get married, have been married for five years or fewer, are living together or will have a

domestic partnership (Tartakovsky, 2015). Tartakovsky further suggests that thinking of your relationship “as a piece of machinery” – even those that run well require regular maintenance (2015). Every family before and during marriage is constantly in dire need of the services of a clinical therapist or a guidance counselor; and this will help in curbing the increase in divorce and ameliorating situations relating to domestic violence.

9.0 Theoretical Explanations for the Need of Guidance Counselors in Curbing Domestic Violence

The use of a theory generally, is to explain why certain events or situations occur or to predict behavior under certain conditions. Certain theories explain the criminal tendency in man, and some of those theories express this tendency from the psychological nature of man. It is not out of point to say that the actions and reasons of some perpetrators of domestic violence are highly connected to their psychological make-up. Thus, the need for counselors to be proactive in curbing the menace should be solid.

i. Labeling Theory: The theory refers to the idea that individuals become deviant when a deviant label is applied to them; they adopt the label by exhibiting the behaviors, actions, and attitudes associated with the label. Labeling theory argues that people become deviant as a result of others forcing that identity upon them. This process works because of stigma in applying a deviant label; one attaches a stigmatized identity to the labeled individual. In this theory, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an "offender". The deviant is one to whom the label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label.

ii. Symbolic Interactionism: This perspective relies on the symbolic meaning that people develop and rely upon in the process of social interaction. Symbolic interaction theory analyzes society by addressing the subjective meanings that people impose on objects, events, and behaviors. Subjective meanings are given primacy because it is believed that people behave based on what they believe and not just on what is objectively true. People interpret one another's behavior and it is these interpretations that form the social bond. It is through these subjective interpretations that individuals manifest their friendly or violent nature towards another person.

These theories on human behavior leave the counselor with a big task. In line with what the labeling theory explains, guidance counselors who are also trained psychologists are needed to help perpetrators of domestic violence who act on their intimate partners based on the negative identity the other(s) impose on them. There is the need for them to be guided not to live or act based on who

others define them to be. In the same vein, guidance counselors are needed to curb domestic violence based on the stand of symbolic interactionism. Individuals' subjective interpretation of others can be done with bias and error. Partners most times, wrongly interpret each other's behavior and actions, thereby leading to violence, there is the need then, for counselors to constantly get involved with both couples and help them to really understand each other's behavior and help them change their perception of each other both before or after marriage.

10. Guidance Counseling Services and Domestic Violence in Nigeria

Domestic violence in Nigeria has been on the rise of recent, the need to have a stable and peaceful society also demands the crushing of this social menace. The need for counselors to step up in solving the problem is also very pertinent. The days of having an office and then waiting for victims to work in can be said to be dying, counselors should have themselves in the field researching and offering their help even to those victims who may want to conceal their experiences.

Whatever approach is taken in solving domestic violence in Nigeria by guidance counselors, should be underpinned by the strong understanding that the victim is experiencing psychological, emotional and physical difficulties as a result of the intentional choice of the perpetrator to abuse and violate them. It is necessary to note that victims in Nigeria become highly adept at developing safety strategies and surviving intolerable situations that may include monitoring and surveillance, emotional, verbal abuse as well as the possibility of physical assault. Counselors are to be mindful of this context and understand the abuse and the perpetrator's choice to use violence as the reason for the above difficulties. This externalizes responsibility and reduces victim blaming as well as holds the perpetrator accountable within the counseling environment.

Traditionally, in Nigeria, as in many other African countries, the beating of wives and children is widely sanctioned as a form of discipline (UNICEF, 2001). Therefore, in beating their-children parents believe they are instilling discipline in them, much the same way as in husbands beating their wives, who are regarded like children to be prone to indiscipline which must be curbed. This is especially so when the woman is economically dependent on the man. The society is basically patriarchal and women's place within the scheme is decidedly subordinate. Domestic violence therefore functions as a means of enforcing conformity with the role of a woman within customary society. It therefore does not matter if the woman is economically dependent or not, her position, like that of the children is subordinate. Violence against women in the home is generally regarded as belonging to the private sphere in Nigeria and is therefore shielded from outside scrutiny.

The Nigerian women-centered and feminist perspectives of family domestic violence, which acknowledge the social pattern of inequality in which violence and abuse is perpetrated, provide a social justice framework for counseling practice. Within this context, the wrongly conceived gendered pattern of violence should be explored in all its complexity as beyond just a gender. An exploration of family domestic violence that is situated within the broader framework of all gender provides opportunities to understand the social nature of all gender discrimination. It also supports opportunities for men, women and children to discuss not only the interpersonal experience of violence but other ways in which disability, poverty and other sources of inequality may have created further vulnerability to abuse.

On the same scale, women and children are the worst victims of domestic violence in Nigeria; there is the need for the Nigerian domestic violence counselor to operate in a manner that supports women and children to experience a sense of confidence. Women and children are encouraged to make choices and decisions about their lives and their autonomy. The counselor should provide information and education to assist women and children to understand their options and take action when they choose to and when necessary. This is different to self-esteem building or counseling approaches which seek to address issues such as passivity or co-dependency in a clinical framework (Laing, 2001, p. 8). This focuses on the clients taking a position of power in their lives with the practitioner encouraging clients to trust their own judgment and decision making. It is important to note, however, that children's real power over their lives is limited, and that they are the most vulnerable to the decisions of others – whether it is the parent using violence, or the decisions of the non-violent parent.

Being conscious of the power within the client-counselor relationship is also important. Narrative therapy is commonly described as a respectful, non-blaming approach to counseling which centers people as the experts in their own lives. Importantly, it assumes people have many skills, competencies, beliefs, values, commitments and abilities that will assist them to change their relationship with problems in their lives (Morgan, 2000). A narrative approach is often cited as an approach that can increase the client's power. The Nigerian domestic violence counselors have to see the clients as experts in their own lives, rather than the counselors taking expert position.

11. Conclusion

In a society like Nigeria where stability is shaky, any possible solution cannot be overlooked, and any threat to peace no matter in what aspect of the society must be quickly addressed with any good options available. The family as foundation of human society has been threatened by the menace - domestic

violence. As much as there are possible ways to solve the problem, that option of guidance and counseling must not die or weaken. Both pre and post marriage counselors must see that they owe the society a duty to help ameliorate this problem especially in Nigeria where domestic violence cases have become rampant by the day. In addition, social institutions, Churches and mosques should establish seminars, outreach programs and offices where professional counselors are invited to educate the people on the need for a violence free society with the home as the cradle. The government should establish and fund counseling centers at the community, and Local Government levels and employ professional counselors to help victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. It is a societal evil and the task to kill it is the responsibility of all.

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