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Societal Responses to Male Victims of Domestic Abuse in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Domestic abuse is a pattern of abusive behaviour against an intimate partner with the use or the threat of abuse. While there has been an increase in service responses to female victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria, there is little evidence of service responses for male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria.

The main aims of this research are to explore perceptions of domestic abuse perpetrated against men in Nigeria and to investigate the availability of service provision for male victims of domestic abuse. This is done against the backdrop of social-cultural and religious factors and the current legislation and policies addressing the issue in Nigeria.

The research design adopted is a qualitative method, involving the collection of qualitative data, from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with law enforcement officers, community stakeholders (local Chiefs / faith-based organisations), advocacy groups and members of the Judiciary in Nigeria on how domestic abuse matters against men are handled by the service providers, how the Nigerian cultural society responds and how adequate the current legislation and policies on addressing domestic abuse against men in Nigeria. Also, A map out of the current legislative framework in Nigeria was conducted, it involved the analysis of relevant articles, legal documents such as The Nigerian Constitution, the Nigeria Penal Code Act, the Nigerian Criminal Code Act, Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act and publications in relation to domestic abuse.

Data collection was conducted from September 2022 – January 2023. The data was analysed using thematic analysis.

The findings identified that the experiences of male victims of domestic are usually dismissed or minimised due to societal expectations of masculinity and religious and cultural beliefs about men's roles. Findings also found the lack of service provisions for men and identified challenges with Nigeria's legal structure.

The research highlights a significant gap in recognising and responding to male victims of domestic abuse because the services in Nigeria on domestic abuse are developed around supporting women. Furthermore, it indicated a need for gender equality in the accessibility and provision of support in help seeking for male victims of domestic abuse.

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Author's Declaration

I certify that the thesis presented here for examination for a PhD degree of the University of Glasgow is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it) and that the thesis has not been edited by a third party beyond what is permitted by the University's PGR Code of Practice.

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it is permitted without full acknowledgement.

I declare that the thesis does not include work forming part of a thesis presented successfully for another degree.

I declare that this thesis has been produced in accordance with the University of Glasgow's Code of Good Practice in Research.

I acknowledge that if any issues are raised regarding good research practice based on review of the thesis, the examination may be postponed pending the outcome of any investigation of the issues.

Date: 29 September 2025

Name: Oluwatofunmi Oreoluwa Tayo

Signature: 

CHAPTER ONE

1.0. Introduction

Domestic Abuse is experienced by all sexes, races, culture, ages, and sexual orientations (Huecker et al., 2021). Domestic abuse has been associated with the intense patriarchal structure found in societies and gender insensitive criminal justice system (Nwanna and Kunnuji, 2016). However, this research will focus on domestic abuse against men. Domestic abuse against men is a term describing violence that is committed against men by their intimate partners (Sugg et al., 1999).

The United Nations defines domestic violence¹ as a pattern of behaviour in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner (United Nations, 2023). It may occur in an intimate relationship such as marriage, cohabitation, dating or within the family². Domestic abuse can take many forms, including physical aggression or assault (hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, restraining, slapping, throwing objects, and battery), sexual abuse, emotional abuse, controlling or domineering, intimidation, stalking, passive or covert abuse and economic deprivation or threats of the aforementioned (Adebayo, 2014).

While the majority of domestic abuse is perpetrated by men against women (Alhabib et al., 2010; Antai, 2011 and Msheilia, 2021), this research focuses on domestic abuse perpetrated against men. For the purpose of this research, I will define domestic abuse against men as a pattern that employs the use of physical force, sexual violence, emotional exploitation, verbal, psychological, economic strength, social capital/networks to control, manipulate, deprive, and abuse a male partner in a relationship. This definition does not negate but aligns with the alternative terms used for domestic abuse such as intimate partner violence, domestic violence, spousal abuse, family violence and dating abuse. This definition indicates that spouses, sexual, dating or intimate partners, family members, children, cohabitants can be victims of domestic abuse regardless of age, gender, culture, race, sexual orientation, faith or class (United Nations, 2021).

Abuse or violence against women has been extensively studied in various disciplines, such as law, criminology, psychology, medicine, social work and sociology (Bakare et al., 2010;

¹ It should be noted that for the purposes of this thesis the term “domestic abuse” will be used but it will also be used interchangeably with “domestic violence”, “intimate partner abuse” and “intimate partner violence” depending on how it is quoted by any author cited.

² It is worth acknowledging that not all countries define domestic abuse or domestic violence in this way. For example, in Scotland domestic abuse is limited to partners or ex-partners (Brooks-Hay and Burman, 2018).

Walby et al., 2014; Dheensa et al., 2024; and Myall et al., 2024). Whereas less attention has been paid to the experiences of men. There is a vast amount of theoretical and empirical research on domestic abuse against women (Swan et al., 2008; Johnson, 2019). However, in these academic discussions, domestic abuse is depicted as synonymous with violence against women neglecting other possible victims (Adebayo, 2014). Women are usually perceived as the victims of domestic violence while men are almost always perceived as the perpetrators.

It is however necessary to listen to the voice of men and develop prevention, early identification, and supportive intervention strategies for men facing domestic abuse. Research on domestic violence should be extended to include the experiences of both genders (Flinck & Paavilainen, 2008). This research does not intend to minimise the severity of domestic abuse against women but to shine the light on male victims and their needs.

The main aim of this study is to contribute to the research on domestic abuse by focusing on forms of domestic abuse perpetrated against men in Nigeria and to consider how the law and society respond to domestic abuse against men in Nigeria, taking account of social-cultural and religious factors. In particular, it aims to address the following: how law conceptualises domestic abuse against men and how law enforcements responds to domestic abuse against men; what is considered as domestic abuse; the factors contributing to men's silence; how they define domestic abuse; how often it is reported; what is done when domestic abuse against men is reported with a view towards aiding gender equality and further understanding gender-based violence.

I became interested in working on male victimization during the course of my master's degree, when I took a course called 'sex, death, gender and insecurity'. Furthermore, my interest in conducting this research on Nigeria is because I am Nigerian. Amongst the topics discussed that piqued my interest was hegemonic and toxic masculinity. During this course I realised; men were also victims of unattainable standards set by society. It got me thinking about how toxic masculinity had put men in situation where vulnerability could not be accepted. I got researching and found a connection between domestic abuse and toxic masculinity which raised a question on how the society that upholds a revered view of masculinity will respond when this perception on masculinity is breached. This brought about my question for this thesis on how Nigerian society responds to male victims of domestic abuse.

1.1.The Nigerian Context

There has been increasing media reports about domestic abuse against men in Nigeria; one recent high-profile murder case that captured Nigeria's attention is that of Maryam Sanda who was found guilty of killing her husband and was sentenced to death by hanging (Paquette, 2020). Another is the case of Mr. Oyelowo Adeniran, who was stabbed to death by his wife, Yewande, in Ibadan Nigeria after a domestic dispute (Daramola, 2018). The aforementioned are few cases amongst a multitude of reports seen on news outlets that are usually not reported until the man is dead or seriously injured, which focuses primarily on physical domestic abuse. As stated above, domestic abuse involves more than just the physical forms (Adebayo 2014).

In spite of the growing media reports, domestic Abuse against men has failed to attract enough attention because of social, cultural, legal, economic, and religious factors in Nigeria (Adetoro and Adetoro, 2021). Due to the acceptance of some abusive behaviour as normal many people do not realise they have been abused (Aihie, 2010). The Nigerian attitude to domestic abuse is heavily influenced by religious and moral grounds founded on the premise that there is a private aspect of a person's life the law should not interfere with (Daramola, 2018). Afrobarometer, while carrying out a survey in Nigeria on gender-based violence conducted face to face interviews on 1,600 adult Nigerians at random and found out that 'more than 68 percent of Nigerians believe that domestic violence should be treated as a private matter to be resolved within the family rather than as a criminal matter that involves law enforcement agencies' (Mbaegbu & Duntoye, 2022: 22). Domestic abuse against men is a vague concept in Nigeria; it is an area that has not been fully explored yet in Nigerian laws and society.

Nigeria is a deeply cultural and religious country. It is very important to recognise the strong influence and importance of culture and religion in Nigeria, it influences the laws and people's perceptions (Ifeanyichukwu et al., 2017). The customs advocate that domestic abuse is a private matter that should be settled within the family, this has also made domestic abuse normalised in Nigeria (Mbaegbu & Duntoye, 2022).

As suggested by Ifeanyichukwu et al., (2017), 'cultural perception of gender roles in the family' play a large role in intensifying the occurrence of domestic abuse between intimate partners. They further stated that as long as spouses see marriage from the cultural point of

view where the male has dominance and the right to control his spouse, domestic abuse will continue to happen within the family and society.

Domestic abuse against men seems rare because it is underreported (Dienye and Gbeneol, 2008); it is also culturally considered shameful in a male dominated society. In the past, Nigerian society and law enforcement tended to perceive men as batterers and women as victims, but females have also exhibited violent behaviour against their male partners and as stated above, there have been reports of an increase in women being arrested and prosecuted for assaulting their husbands (Enosh, Eisikovits and Gross, 2013).

Domestic violence against men also occurs in same sex relationships, with men perpetrating this violence against their male partners (Ojilere et al., 2019) but it is worthy to note that Nigeria has heavily criminalised homosexual relationships making it difficult to ascertain the prevalence of domestic violence against men and more difficult for men in homosexual relationships to get help for fear of being arrested (Ogubajo et al., 2020). Research by Tjaden and Thonennes (2000) however indicated that a high percentage of individuals in same sex relationships are victims of various forms of intimate partner abuse (Owen and Burke, 2004).

The Nigeria NOI polls conducted a public opinion on domestic violence, 43 percent of the people believed that women perpetrated domestic violence against men is prevalent. One in nine men reported being victims of domestic violence (Huecker, King, Jordan and Smock, 2021). According to the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSVRT), between May 2019 to August 2021 there has been a report of 5705 cases of domestic violence with 9 percent of the reports from men and 91 percent from women. In 2021, from January to June, there has been a report of 1329 cases of domestic violence with 15 percent of the reports from men and 94 percent from women (DSVRT).

Domestic abuse against men however has been largely glossed over but remains a reality occurring in virtually every society in varying degrees (Adebayo 2014). The problem in conducting studies that seek to describe and understand domestic abuse is the amount of silence, fear and shame that results from abuse within families and relationships, contributed by cultural and religious factors. This is why domestic violence against men remains largely unreported (Ibid.).

1.2. Support Services in Nigeria

Whereas there are specialist supportive intervention strategies for women in Nigeria, there are none aimed at supporting men (Adetoro and Adetoro, 2020). The Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation (WAPA) of Lagos State in Nigeria, has units and departments dealing specifically with women's development; one of these units is the Domestic Violence Unit mandated with providing psycho-social interventions to survivors of domestic abuse and conducting social investigation of cases of gender-based violence against women (Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, 2022). There is no State or Federal ministry created solely for dealing with domestic abuse against men in Nigeria and the police are not equipped or properly trained to deal with reports on domestic violence against men (Adelagun, 2021). In contrast to Nigeria, the United Kingdom can be seen to have taken major steps to recognise that men can be victims of domestic violence, a classic example is the availability of the men's advice line and the Abused Men in Scotland, two confidential helplines for male victims of domestic abuse.³

1.3. An overview of legislative provisions

Prior to 2015, there was no National or Federal Law on domestic abuse in Nigeria. However, because domestic abuse is considered a violation of a person's right to dignity which prohibits any form of violence or use of force, Section 34 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 which provides for a fundamental right, could be used to protect victims subjected to domestic abuse.

It was only in 2015 that the Federal Government enacted a law against domestic abuse in Nigeria. Consequently, the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015 (VAPP Act) was passed. However, this law has still not resolved the issue, in spite of its existence (VAPP Act) the prevalence of domestic abuse in Nigeria remains especially due to the Acts limitation in scope of applicability, specifically Section 47 of the Act limits the scope of its applicability to the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (Daramola, 2018).

The Criminal Code applicable in Southern Nigeria and the Penal Code applicable in Northern Nigeria both contain provisions that criminalize different forms of violence but neither of the two contain any provision strictly aimed at domestic abuse (Adetoro and Adetoro, 2021).

³ <https://mensadvice.org.uk/male-victims/> and <https://abusedmeninscotland.org/>

It is worthy of note that the Penal Code which has been adopted by the Northern part of Nigeria legalises and culturally accepts domestic abuse involving a man disciplining or beating his wife for the purpose of correction, this is found in section 55(1)(d) of the Penal Code. While this behaviour is culturally and religiously accepted and practiced, the legal contestation is often premised on the tenet of Sharia Law which to a large extent departs from the VAPP Act of 2015.

As stated above, protection against domestic abuse is not provided in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria but is provided under the provisions of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act 2015, which aims to eliminate all forms of domestic violence and to assist victims of domestic abuse. This coming chapters will consider the legal framework that governs domestic abuse in Nigeria, the roles and the problems with how these laws are implemented by law enforcement.

1.4. Masculinity and domestic abuse

According to some, men who are abused by their female intimate partner may feel that they have failed to achieve the society's expectations of masculine characteristics on being tough, strong and self-reliant (Nwanna and Kunnuji, 2016). As a result, these men may feel emasculated, marginalized, ashamed and embarrassed making them unable to ask for help or discuss or report their violent experiences (Ibid.). Also, some of the men who had the courage to report this abuse are usually met with reactions of disbelief, surprise and scepticism from the staff of domestic abuse shelters, legal-based institutions and hospitals, as well as friends and neighbours making them feel more abused (Lupri and Grandin, n.d.). According to Adetoro and Adetoro (2021), 'most Africans are brought up to look to traditions to resolve differences or conflicts arising out of marital or intimate relationship, but often these traditions are not progressive enough to deal with the exigencies of modern living and its consequences within the context of abusive behaviours or domestic violence'. Consequently, acts of domestic abuse go unreported to either law enforcement or victim advocate agencies where they exist. Domestic abuse against men by their spouse increases when there are changes in power dynamics, economic independence, and control over economy and resources (Lupri and Grandin, n.d.). Because of how much Nigeria depends on culture and tradition, domestic violence against men is not properly handled or recognised.

As such, this research addresses questions on the societal and the legal response to domestic abuse and the shortcomings in the law governing domestic abuse in Nigeria.

1.5. Research Questions

1. How do key stakeholders/service responders understand and explain domestic abuse against men in Nigeria?
2. How do social-cultural factors influence the way key stakeholders/service responders' respond to domestic abuse against men in Nigeria?
3. What do the key stakeholders/service responders think are the main challenges in responding to male victims of domestic abuse?
4. What is the current legal framework for addressing domestic abuse in Nigeria and how adequate is it for addressing domestic abuse against men in Nigeria?

These research questions have been addressed using a qualitative method, involving the collection of qualitative data, from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with law enforcement officers, community stakeholders (local Chiefs / faith-based organisations), advocacy groups and members of the Judiciary in Nigeria on how domestic abuse matters against men are handled by the service providers, how the Nigerian cultural society responds and how adequate the current legislation and policies on addressing domestic abuse against men in Nigeria is. A map out of the current legislative framework in Nigeria was also conducted, it involved the analysis of relevant articles, legal documents such as the Nigerian Constitution, the Nigeria Penal Code Act, the Nigerian Criminal Code Act, Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act and publications in relation to domestic abuse.

1.6. Significance of Research

This study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by addressing and deepening insight on domestic abuse against men and creating academic and social awareness and understanding the legal modalities to tackle domestic abuse against men in Nigeria. In the process, the research will contribute conceptually, empirically and theoretically to the discourse of domestic abuse against men. Hence, the work will contribute conceptually by redefining domestic abuse against men from context induced factors, economic and psychological manipulations to dominate a male partner in a relationship. In the area of empirical research, the interrelationship between statutory frameworks and Penal Codes will be established in the context of interpreting legislation pertaining to domestic abuse against men. It is hoped that the work will expand the frontier of knowledge by applying and underpinning the theoretical constructs of feminist theory and its relevancy to the Nigerian

situation. It is hoped that the work will add meaning insight and usefulness to academics in teaching, research and advocacy. In addition, it is hoped that legal practitioners, health-workers, social workers, public commentators and media outlets will utilize the outcomes to address and promote peaceful co-existence between partners in a relationship. The public agencies or government institutions will benefit from the work in the area of policy redesign and legal amendment, usage and interpretation of domestic abuse.

1.7. Structure of thesis

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter two provides a review of academic literatures on domestic abuse. Finding the gap in literature by evaluating and critiquing the available data on how the society responds to male victims of domestic abuse.

Chapter three is the methodology chapter and the rationale for the method chosen is discussed and defended.

Chapter four is divided into two sections, with the first dissecting the available legislation on domestic abuse internationally and in Nigeria, determining if the laws have provisions for male victims of domestic abuse and the second analysing the research findings which explore key stakeholders' views on the adequacy of the available legislative framework on domestic abuse in Nigeria. This chapter addresses research question four, which is; How adequate are the current legislation and policies on addressing domestic abuse against men in Nigeria?

Chapter five analyses findings which explore key stakeholders' understandings and explanations of domestic abuse against men considering social-cultural factors. This chapter addresses research question one and two, which are; one, how do key stake holders/service responders understand and explain domestic abuse against men in Nigeria? And what are the social-cultural factors affecting the way key stakeholders/service responders' approach domestic abuse?

Chapter six discuss findings on key stakeholders' views on the barriers in help seeking and challenges in responding to domestic abuse against men. This chapter addresses research question three, which is; What do service responders think are the main challenges in responding to male victims of domestic abuse?

Chapter seven, which is the final and concluding chapter, reviews the findings, proffering recommendations, identifying limitations of the research and concludes the thesis by setting

out the contributions made by this research to the academic community and the Nigerian society.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review existing literature on domestic abuse, and specifically that on domestic abuse against men. Research literature on male experiences of domestic abuse is relatively scarce, especially in Nigeria since most available literature focuses on female victims of domestic abuse. This chapter will explore the current academic debate on domestic abuse against both men and women internationally and in Nigeria.

Section one of this chapter will start by discussing the statistical context of gender-based violence.

Section two examines the prevalence of domestic abuse in Nigeria, in order to provide background on how Nigerian society perceives domestic abuse and the reasons for that perception.

Section three explains the main forms of domestic abuse, the different responses to domestic abuse by men and women and the consequences or impact of domestic abuse on them.

Section four discusses differing perspectives of domestic abuse, and highlights the various lenses we can use to understand domestic abuse. This will include a focus on coercive control, that is crucial as it shifts the understanding of domestic abuse from the conventional physical abuse to emphasize on the more difficult to detect abuses that involve a pattern of control and manipulation. This section will also evaluate hegemonic masculinity and how masculinity is perceived in Africa.

Section five analyses the different responses to domestic abuse by men and women, it also examines female perpetrators of domestic abuse and the victimization of male victims and how the label victim might isolate men.

Section six focuses on the understanding of domestic abuse against men in Nigeria.

The seventh and final section is the conclusion of this chapter.

2.0.1. Literature Search Strategy

Literature was obtained through the University of Glasgow library services, Google scholar, Sage journals, Wiley online library, Research gate and Taylor and Francis Online. The key search words used were “male victims of domestic abuse”, “male victims of intimate partner

violence”, “intimate partner violence against men”, “reaction to domestic violence against men”, “culture and domestic violence in Nigeria” and “police reaction to male victims of intimate partner violence”. National surveys and reports as well as media reports on Domestic Violence were also assessed. The search was restricted to literature published between 2000 and 2025.

2.1. Statistical context of GBV

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), *‘approximately one in three women (31.6%) worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime, most commonly perpetrated by an intimate partner. Furthermore, 25.8% of partnered women aged 15 - 49 years and 24.7% ages 15 years and older have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) at least once in their lives’* (WHO, 2026). These figures demonstrate the widespread nature of GBV across different societies and cultures.

While women constitute the majority of documented GBV victims globally, evidence increasingly suggests that men can also experience violence in intimate relationships (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations Home, 2025). However, reliable statistics on male victimisation remain limited in many countries, especially Nigeria. Existing data are often affected by underreporting, stigma, and gender norms that discourage men from disclosing abuse or seeking help (Thobejane et al., 2018; Dienye and Gbeneol, 2008). As a result, the true prevalence of male victimisation is likely underestimated. Researchers and international organisations have highlighted persistent gaps in data collection on male experiences of GBV, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. (United Nations, 2025)

Within Africa, GBV remains a significant challenge. UN Office on Drugs and Crime (2025), indicate that Africa records some of the highest rates of violence against women and girls, including intimate partner violence and femicide. However, data availability and reporting systems vary considerably across African countries, making it difficult to establish accurate prevalence rates for all forms of GBV, especially those affecting men. (Sylvia Maina, UN Women and Lauren Rooney, 2024).

In Nigeria, GBV continues to be a widespread social problem. UNICEF reports that GBV, including domestic violence, sexual violence, child marriage, and female genital mutilation, affects millions of women and girls and is rooted in unequal power relations and socio-

cultural norms (UNICEF Nigeria, 2024). Also, research and policy responses have largely focused on female victims, resulting in limited attention to male victims.

The scarcity of reliable data on male experiences of domestic abuse in Nigeria does not necessarily indicate low prevalence. Rather, it reflects barriers to help-seeking, social stigma and the absence of gender-inclusive reporting services. This gap in knowledge highlights the importance of the present study, which seeks to contribute to a better understanding of domestic abuse and male victimisation in Nigeria.

2.2. Prevalence of domestic abuse in Nigeria

This section will discuss the prevalence of domestic abuse in Nigeria and internationally.

According to Ike et al., (2022), *‘studies in Nigeria have shown that the prevalence of IPV ranges from 7% to 31% for physical violence, 31% to 61% for emotional/psychological violence and 20% to 31% for sexual violence (Oloniniyi et al., 2022). Furthermore, studies conducted across different geographical regions in Nigeria have reported the prevalence of IPV to range from 41% in Nigeria’s south-south (Dienye et al., 2014), 42% in the north (Tanimu et al., 2016), 29% in the south-west (Okenwa et al., 2009) and 78.8% in the southeastern region of the country (Okemgbom et al., 2002)’.*

In a survey of 410 men, aged 20-59 years conducted in Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria, Ameh et al., (2012) found that 95.4% of the men that took part in the survey believed that men can be victims of domestic violence, 55.4% percent of survey participants had been victims of domestic violence with 82% of the violence being emotional and verbal abuse. While 13.2% experienced physical abuse including a physical attack or the use of acids and chemicals to their disfigurement. According to this study, most of the violence against men is usually verbal and psychological in nature (Ameh et al., 2012).

According to the Premium Times, a newspaper, the Nigerian Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation reported that from January to May 2021, they received 43 reports of gender-based violence and domestic violence against men in Lagos State, Nigeria. This might seem like a small number in comparison to the 286 reports of gender-based violence and domestic abuse against women, but it is suggested that the difference may be due to the higher levels of societal awareness and openness to reports of domestic abuse from women than from men (Adelagun 2021). Oyediran and Feyisetan (2017) conducted research on the prevalence and determinants of intimate partner violence in Nigeria. This study was

conducted by analysing the 2013 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) using a multilevel logistic regression model. They found that gender, age, education, religion, residence, education, income and status are related to the prevalence of domestic violence. A person with no education and is financially challenged is more likely to be abused; they are also the least likely to report an abuse. Further, people from a community that condones domestic abuse would experience higher prevalence of domestic abuse (Oyediran and Feyisetan 2017).

Obarisiagbon (2019) posits that historically focus has been placed on female victims of domestic abuse and male perpetrators, but recent studies are now recognising men as possible victims of domestic abuse. According to (Olatunji et al., 2023) there is a struggle for the criminalization of domestic abuse in Nigeria because of the influence of traditions and cultures on one side and western advancement on the other end. He stated further that the view and responses of the society to the various forms of domestic abuse differs largely dependent on the region of Nigeria. He suggested that in Nigeria domestic abuse perpetrated against men is usually not reported until the man is killed by his spouse because male victims suffer in silence since male victims in Nigeria are not aware of any available assistance for them.

Prevalence of domestic abuse in Nigeria cannot be directly compared to the international prevalence because different countries have varied ways they record data about domestic abuse.

2.2.1. International literature on prevalence

Gelles, (1974) one of the first researchers to report on male and female perpetrators of domestic abuse, believed that ‘conjugal violence occurred with equal frequency among husbands and wives.’ He reported that it was possible for some women to abuse their husbands for no reason. In the US in 1975, Straus and Gelles introduced the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), a scale which is used to measure the frequency and types of domestic abuse (Lehrner and Allen, 2014), which was used for the National Family Violence Surveys. This survey showed that husbands experienced sorts of violence from their wives (Straus and Gelles, 1986 and Straus, 1980). However, it should be noted that there have been multiple criticisms on this scale and is therefore highly contested. Lehner and Allen (2014) conducted mixed-method research making use of the Conflict Tactics Scale and interviews to determine women’s CTS reports, this study was conducted on 467 undergraduate women in

heterosexual relationships. It was found that CTS did not properly capture the context of domestic abuse, as it considered self-defence, playful aggressiveness and ‘mock violence’ as domestic abuse which can essentially contribute to misclassification and overreporting of abuse (Ackerman, 2018; Lehner and Allen, 2014).

According to Kolbe and Büttner (2020), in a study that identified the prevalence of domestic violence against men by analysing publications retrieved from the PubMed database on injured persons, aggressors and natures of violence, found physical domestic abuse against men to have a prevalence rate between 3.4% and 20.3% for physically and mentally healthy men and 31.8% for men with mental disorders or disabilities. A study conducted on women who use violence on their intimate partners suggested that the prevalence of men’s intimate partner violence is dependent on the type of abuse that is perpetrated (Swan et al., 2008). According to Breiding et al. (2013), prevalence of Intimate partner violence or domestic abuse among those who are LGBTQ+ is similar to or higher than heterosexual couples. He found that 61.1% of bisexual women, 43.8% of lesbian women, 37.3% of bisexual men, and 26.0% of homosexual men in the USA experienced intimate partner violence during their life, as opposed to 35.0% of heterosexual women and 29.0% of heterosexual men experiencing abuse. He further stated that 4.1 million people of the LGBT community in the United States have experienced domestic abuse at one point Breiding et al., (2013).

2.3. Forms of Domestic abuse

Introduction

This section will explain the main forms of domestic abuse experienced by men, the different experiences of men and women and the consequences or impact of domestic abuse on them.

Domestic abuse can take different forms, physical, verbal and psychological, sexual, economical or financial. It can happen to anybody irrespective of their age, gender or social status. However, these forms of domestic abuse might appear in varying degrees between men and women. While every gender experience domestic abuse, there are differences in their experiences, with research finding that men experience more verbal and psychological abuse and women experience more physical abuse (Hines et al., 2007). Roe (2009) in Gadd (2017) stated that male victims that experience physical violence, assaults and stalking are less likely to report their experiences than female victims and will also hesitate to report any problems or effects resulting from abuse. Gadd (2017) asserts that male victims of domestic abuse experience domestic abuse less frequently but explains further that their experiences

are actually more life threatening. He further states that ‘men generally suffer far fewer physical and psychological consequences from domestic violence perpetrated by women, suggesting that less men require frequent medical treatment after domestic violence and unlike female victims rarely depend financially on their wives, signifying the less likelihood for men to be trapped in abusive relationships (ibid, Hester 2009).

These forms of domestic abuse will be discussed below;

The violence against persons (prohibition) Act, (VAPP) 2015 defines physical violence as ‘an offence when a person wilfully causes and inflicts injury on another person by means of weapon, substance or objects, these includes injury, spousal battery, harmful substance attack, etc.’. In Nigeria and some other countries in Africa, physical violence in the form of wife beating is culturally and legally acceptable, according to Section 55(1)(d) of the Penal Code, which is adopted by the Northern part of Nigeria, a man can discipline his wife for correction purposes (Obi, 2020). This provision is still acceptable and practiced in Nigeria today and the society encourages it, with both men and women accepting it as a norm even though it is considered an offence under the provisions of the Violence Against Persons Act (Rani et al., 2004; Chisale, 2016). Kolbe and Büttner (2020) found a 3.4% to 20.3% rate of physical domestic abuse on mentally healthy men and a 31.8% rate on men with disabilities or mental disorders. There is no disputing that, the average man is physically bigger and stronger than the average woman (Nuwer, 2017), so it is fairly obvious that because of these men can inflict more physical abuse on their female partners or can even easily restrain their partner when they are being abusive. However, Langley and Levy (1977 in Hines 2001), believe that women make up for this inadequacy by using weapons like hot water, dishes, lamps etc. Victims of physical domestic violence can be left with bruises, broken bones and internal bleeding but it is not just visible injuries that are the effects of physical domestic violence. Severe anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, feelings of isolation and social stigmatization are also some of the of the consequences of physical abuse (Enakele, 2019).

Verbal and psychological abuse (is considered the most common form of domestic violence against men). Psychological violence entails frequent use of words and non-physical actions to manipulate or frighten someone. It involves the use of threats, gaslighting and deliberately trying to confuse someone (Hamamra et al., 2025; O’Leary, 2015). It can be best explained as the use of coercive control against another. According to Evan Stark (Stark, 2007), coercive control is a pattern of behaviour which seeks to take away a victim’s liberty or freedom, to

strip away their sense of self. The Women's Aid Federation of England also defines coercive control as 'an act or a pattern of acts or assaults, threats, humiliation and intimidation or any other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim; this act is intended to make a person dependent' (Women's Aid, 2025). Psychological abuse may involve the perpetrator to torture, monitor and criticize the victim, creating a world of fear, confusion and terror to gain control (Ibraheem, 2017). Examples of psychological abuse include, harassment, discrimination, verbal abuse (Obi, 2020). According to Follingstad et al. (1990), several victims have claimed that psychological or emotional abuse as the worst kind of abuse, even worse than physical abuse, they further specified, isolation and jealousy as the most frequent types of abuse and verbal attacks and threats of torture or harm as the worst types of psychological abuse. The Nigerian VAPP Act defines psychological abuse as 'any act including confinement, isolation, verbal assault, humiliation, intimidation or any other treatment which may diminish the sense of identity, dignity or self-worth of a person. According to the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), psychological abuse by an intimate partner has been experienced by over 43 million women and 38 million men. Psychological violence against men has a prevalent rate between 7.3% and 37% for physically and mentally healthy men and 42.9% for men with psychological disorders (Kolbe and Büttner, 2020). This data shows that psychological violence is the most prevalent form of domestic abuse. The VAPP Act recognises psychological abuse in Section 14 and protects against any form of psychological, verbal or emotional violence.

Sexual abuse often takes place within the context of a domestically abusive relationship. Swan et al. (2008), defines sexual abuse as "any situation in which one person uses verbal or physical means to obtain sexual activity against consent and can be done using drugs or alcohol, with or without the other person's consent". According to Ifeanyichukwu, Christopher and Kizito (2017) sexual violence 'includes coercing sexual contact, rape including marital rape, attack on sexual body parts, forcing sex following physical violence, indecent exposure and sexually demeaning another'. Prospero and Fawson (2010) reported that male victims of sexual violence experienced more of insisted or persuasive sexual coercion than forced sexual coercion, this is unlike the experiences by women, which is mostly forced sexual coercion. Prospero and Fawson (2010) suggests that men find it more difficult to deny sex from a woman because they believe it is a threat to their masculinity if they are not able to perform when required even when it is coerced and forced. According to Peterson and Plantin (2019), a man being sexually abused goes against traditional masculinity

norms. Kolbe and Büttner (2020), opine that sexual violence has the lowest occurrence rate in domestic violence against men, according to their data, the prevalence of sexual domestic violence is between 0.2% and 7% for healthy men and between 4.1% and 8.8% for men with psychiatric disabilities. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the United State of America, their National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey found that, perpetrators of rape and unwanted sexual contact against male victims were mostly other men, while perpetrators of other forms of Sexual Violence such as Made to Penetrate (where men are forced to penetrate someone else by majorly women) and sexual coercion against men were most often women. Both women and men perpetrate stalking of men. Women were mostly the perpetrators of intimate partner violence against men.

Economic Abuse reduces the victim's ability to support themselves these mostly happens when one partner is forced to depend on his partner financially and has limited access to money, employment or assets (Obi, 2020). Examples according to the VAPP Act are forced financial dependence, abandonment of spouse, children and dependents without sustenance, forceful ejection from home and damage to property with intent to cause distress.

2.4. Differing Perspectives on Domestic Abuse

Explanations and understanding of domestic abuse operate at individual and societal levels. This section will outline the relevant theoretical frameworks and concepts underpinning this research. It will begin with the societal perspectives or levels such as feminist theoretical perspectives, hegemonic masculinities and coercive control and end with the more individualised perspective like the socio-ecological model. These theories and concepts will be used to link this study and previous research while acting as a guide in interpreting the research questions.

2.4.1. Feminist Theoretical perspectives

Since the 1970s, feminist theorists have done a lot to bring attention to the plight of women subjected to abuse (McPhail, 2007 and Javaid, 2016). Feminist work emphasises that domestic abuse is a result of male oppression against women within a patriarchal system, where men are seen as the perpetrators and the women as the victims (Dobash and Dobash, 1979 and McPhail, 2007). Estrich (1988) described violence against women as 'an act of male power'. However, this awareness also resulted in emphasis on women as victims, connecting femininity and women to vulnerability to victimization (Mahoney,1994). When women committed violent acts, they were considered to do so as a result of their

victimisation, Lysova (2016) emphasized that this view of women solely as victims was actually harmful to women as it stripped women of their agency and denied them the opportunity to be fully human. Recent work places a greater emphasis on abused women being survivors and resilient and not just considered to be hapless victims (Kelly 1988; Burman and Gelsthorpe, 2017).

Feminist theories question male privilege and traditional or outdated customs and beliefs encouraging male perpetrated violence of any kind, while promoting female empowerment and liberation (Dowd, 2008; Hunnicutt, 2009). Feminist theory has also helped to explain how gender roles have contributed to domestic abuse against women, with the societal expectations based on gender roles, the society expecting reverence and submission from their women, and how the society justifies any means to maintain this submission even if it involves abuse and violence (Healey et al, 1998). Westmarland and Burrell (2023) explained that patriarchal gender norms harms and affects both men and women, with men constantly trying to fulfil the societal definition of a real man while struggling with the stereotypical victim definition.

When second-wave feminism was introduced in the mid-20th century, it questioned victim blaming because at that time women were blamed and therefore held responsible for provoking men to commit domestic violence (Gadd, 2017). Early feminists, shed light on the differences and similarities between male and female victims and also introduced women as not just victims but as possible offenders too (Burman and Gelsthorpe, 2017; Abrams, 2015). However, before this the dominant feminist view did not acknowledge female perpetrators or batterers, the few times it was discussed it was understood as self-defence (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; and Gelles, 1986). Burtell and Carney (2005), believes this was as a result of fear of decrease in funding and support of female victims of domestic abuse.

According to Kerry (2003) and McPhail (2007), the challenge with viewing domestic abuse from feminist theoretical standpoint is the preconception against male victims of domestic abuse, battered men are not offered sufficient support or recognition and this influences the help and support provided by support and advocacy groups. Lysova (2016) contends that women are also not restrained or held accountable when they commit abuse against their partners because it is not recognised, and the society struggles to recognise female aggression.

Feminist theory does not recognise women as just victims, some feminists have argued that women should not be seen as passive, they are complex and diverse, and their behaviour varies (McHugh, 2005).

Kerry (2003) criticized feminist theory, saying that not all male batterers are motivated by gender domination, believing there are various reasons a man might commit domestic violence, this could be because of a physical or mental disorder.

Feminist theory does not just focus on gender but also recognises the way social contexts influence human relation. Third wave of feminism recognises intersectionality and diversity, recognising inclusivity and is non-judgemental (Burman and Gelsthorpe, 2017).

There is no denying the help the feminist theory has provided in protecting and shedding light on domestic abuse particularly against women however, the major argument against feminist theory is its emphasis on female victims of male violence, it is believed that similar violence may be committed by both men and women against each other (Dixon, 2014).

2.4.1.1. Coercive control

This section focuses on the importance and relevance of coercive control, highlighting the debate on the applicability to male victims as well as the difficulties in applying it.

Coercive control is a key feminist concept, and Stark defines coercive control as “an ongoing strategy of isolation of the victim from friends, family and children; control of access to resources such as transportation, money and food; and control of access to employment and education.” (Stark 2007; Candela 2016). Coercive control is based on the need for power and control, according to Candela, (2016), it encompasses cases where there is a clear pattern of power and control without physical abuse. Evan Stark based his understanding of coercive control on intimidation, emotional abuse, isolation, minimizing, denying, and blame, using children and male privilege; economic abuse, coercion and threats (Stark, 2007). The major characteristic of coercive control is the pattern of abusive behaviour (ibid.). Some of the characteristics of domestic abuse when seen on its own can be dismissed as inconsequential and minor and that is why it is important to note that it is the pattern and repetition of these tactics that makes the abuse so harmful (ibid).

Because of the nature of coercive control, there has been struggles with proving it is occurring. As stated by Candela (2016), the majority of domestic abuse statutes require the victim to prove they had been physically abused or physically threatened to be considered

victims of domestic of abuse and gain access to protection orders. Victims of coercive control are rarely physically abused but are terrified of the implied warnings if they do not comply with the demands of the abuser. The intention of the perpetrator of coercive control is to control and manipulate the victim (Stark, 2007). Victims of coercive control are usually deprived of their basic human rights like, the right to privacy, right of liberty and equality (Kelly and Johnson, 2008) and this makes them lose their self-esteem and sense of self.

While Stark (2007), does not expressly state that men cannot be victims of domestic abuse he asserts that he had never had a case involving female perpetrators of coercive control, saying there is no record of this in literature. It can be inferred that Stark believed men cannot be victims of coercive control perpetrated by women. Walklate et al., (2022) criticised the statement by Stark (2007), declaring that such an assertion feeds into victimhood and perpetration as synonymous with femininity and masculinity (women as victims or survivors and men as perpetrators). Hester (2009) further confirms that coercive control barely occurs by female perpetrators on male victims. However, Candela (2016), argues that coercive control affects all genders and encourages legislatures to implement gender neutral descriptions into laws, providing help for all genders. The problem with viewing coercive control as an abuse that just recognises women as victims is not only its disregard of male victims but also members of the LGBTQ+ community (Candela, 2016).

According to Walklate et al., (2022), coercive control on male victims can manifest as a pattern whereby they are alienated from their friends, being told how to dress and style their hair, being 'guilt tripped' and badgered into doing uncomfortable things. The most common form of coercive control over men is considered to be the threat of parental alienation, that is being threatened and denied access to their children before and after separation Walklate et al., (2022). Although there are several debates about the legitimacy of parental alienation as it has not been clearly proven (Doughty et al. 2021). A survey conducted by Walklate et al (2022) on male victims of coercive control showed that 89% of the respondents were fathers and their major concern was their relationship with their children. They described parental alienation as their partners using their children to manipulate them and as pawns to get their way with failure to adhere to their partner's wishes resulting in decreased/denied access to their children (Walklate et al. 2022). Although it should be noted that women may have to restrict men's access to children due to legitimate safety reasons and men may sometimes portray themselves as the victims as a means to continue their abuse on women (Douglas, 2021).

In the United Kingdom, the law recognises coercive control as a form of domestic abuse and anybody that tries to ‘control their partners through threats, emotional abuse, or by restricting their personal or financial freedom could face the same repercussions as people who physically abuse their partners’ (Candela, 2016, p. 118 and Walklate et al., 2022). Despite the above-mentioned importance and relevance of coercive control, some critics have posed arguments against its use, including that if the language defining coercive control is not appropriate, people might take advantage of the provision and report minor or trivial conflicts as coercive control (Johnson 2009). However, Johnson further stated that this problem can be solved by adopting a measurement to distinguish between standard conflict and coercive control. Another concern raised is that some of the features of coercive control may not be regarded as abuse in some cultures and adopting coercive control into law will be unnecessary. However as argued by Candela (2016), just because an element of abuse is a norm in a culture does not diminish the effect of this abuse on a victim. She further stated that disregarding the victims that might be suffering from domestic abuse because of cultural perceptions and norms would be unjust.

2.4.2. Hegemonic Masculinity

The idea of hegemonic masculinity emanates from the field of masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Demetriou, 2001). Hegemonic Masculinity is a concept that according to Connell (2005), does not subscribe to men as possible victims of domestic abuse perpetrated by women. This is because in many societies, men are considered dominant while women are seen as subordinate. This makes the concept of men as victims a difficult notion within an ideal of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic Masculinity according to Javaid (2016), refers to culturally idealised practices of masculinity that perpetuates patriarchy and encourages the concept of an ideal man. Javaid argues that men who are unable to achieve hegemonic masculinity that is, societal expectation of them being tough, powerful, strong and unemotional make men who have experienced violence reluctant to get help because of fear of being ridiculed by the community and the available support systems. Domestic abuse is generally regarded as a male problem since it is overwhelmingly committed by men against women and because of this, the idea of a man being abused is a strange concept because men are meant to be strong (Huntley et al., 2019; Adebayo and Iweala, 2022).

Hegemonic masculinity promotes gender expectations of men and women, these expectations influence the type of responses and services victims of domestic abuse receive (Javaid, 2016).

This cultural and traditional orientation of masculinity also prompts the view of men as superior, encouraging physical expression of masculinity as a tool which contributes to domestic abuse against their intimate partner (Ifeanyichikwu et al, 2017). Westmarland and Burrell (2023), explaining the societal expectations of men adopted a measuring scale known as the 'Man Box' developed by Equimundo (Heilman et al., 2017), that specified behaviours acceptable for 'real men', they included; 'self-sufficiency, toughness, adherence to rigid gender roles, heterosexuality, hypersexuality, aggression, and control over women' (Westmarland and Burrell, 2023, p3). Hegemonic masculinity promotes norms of male dominance and female subordination which can contribute to the perpetration of domestic abuse (Connell, 2005). At the same time, these norms construct men as strong, invulnerable and powerful making it difficult for male victims of domestic abuse to recognise their experiences or seek help. Men who adopt these standards often struggle when they experience abuse, feeling unmanly, embarrassed and unable to seek help (Westmarland and Burrell, 2023).

In Africa especially in Nigeria, there is a constant pressure on the man to provide for the nuclear and extended family, failure to achieve these demands is a bruise on a man's ego making him feel like he is losing control (Mensah, 2021; Olawole et al., 2004). This leads to a struggle to gain some kind of control and expressing his masculinity and as explained by conflict theory by Straus and Gelles (1986) can lead to a need to dominate his partner leading to a power tussle leading to domestic abuse (Ifeanyichikwu et al, 2017). According to Isangha, (2024) male victims of domestic abuse struggle to recognise their victimization due to gender stereotypes, societal norms and the lack of awareness and support. They stated further that these societal norms have also affected help provision by professional service responders as they are unable to provide effective care due to a lack of funding, training, support services tailored to men and lack of acknowledgement of male victimization by the society (Tshoane et al, 2023).

2.4.3. Masculinity in Africa

Masculinity represents the expected characteristics of a man in a particular society, this is influenced by religious, cultural, geographical, and economic factors (Chitando et al., 2024). As a social construct, masculinity is maintained through cultural norms, social consent and practice. As discussed in Section 2.3.2, Connells (2005) concept of hegemonic masculinity has been particularly influential within scholarship on masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity

embodies an aspirational ideal of a man rather than an achievable reality for most men (Mfecane, 2024).

Mfecane (2024), critiques the adaptation of hegemonic masculinity conceptualised by Connell in the research of masculinity in Africa, arguing that hegemonic masculinity embodies an aspirational ideal of a man rather than an achievable reality for most men. He goes on to argue that the concept is narrow, in considering characteristics from the Global North like individualism and secularism, while overlooking non-western or African dynamics. Although this framework has been widely used in African literature, Mfecane argues that it is not widely applicable to Africa's peculiar cultural and historical life. Morrell et al., (2012) also contends that masculinity is not universal, stating that it is shaped by history, race, class and politics. They emphasized how this shows up in South Africa, highlighting how apartheid, poverty, violence and colonialism has framed masculinity in South Africa.

African masculinity is shaped by peculiar socio-cultural dynamics, for example; in Africa, masculine identity is closely tied to fulfilling obligations to family and community, as well as the continued importance of initiation rites and age hierarchies in marking transitions from boyhood to manhood (Mfecane 2024; Ammann and Staudacher 2021). According to Morrell et al., (2012) masculinity in Africa, especially in South Africa is more connected to economic survival, community, tradition and is shaped by history and colonial trauma.

Despite the criticism of the application of Connell's conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity to Africa, there are shared aspects of masculinities in Africa and the Global North. Across both Africa and the Global North, masculinities are understood as plural, hierarchical, and closely tied to heterosexuality, authority, and economic provision (Mfecane 2024). Morrell (2012) also posits that both Africa and the Global North share the effects of patriarchy, the idea that real men should prove themselves and exert male dominance over women.

According to Chitando et al. (2024) there is a negative representation of 'men in Africa' as violent and incompetent as represented in much media and contemporary literature. They, however, contend that seeing African men this way is a negative stereotype as African men have made considerable effort to change in spite of these negative narratives. This view of men across the African continent constantly negotiating how to be 'good men' within

constantly changing economic and social landscapes is also held by others (Ammann and Staudacher 2021).

Ammann and Staudacher (2021) posit that masculinity in Africa is seen as aggressive, violent or in crisis whilst this view is often normal or universal in the Global North, they argue that representing African masculinity this way is harmful as this view shapes global policy, academic research and NGO interventions.

It is no dispute that African culture celebrates dominant men and frowns at discussions on gender equality (Derry, 2020). This has led western literature to focus on the control and violence of men in Africa, feeding into the narrative of African men as violent (Chitando et al., 2024). Morrell et al., (2012) argue that there is a high level of violence in South Africa by boys and men, evidenced as male-on-male violence and male-on-female violence, which they believe is linked to how boys are raised into manhood in Africa. However, they emphasized violence in South Africa became normalised through apartheid policing and colonial warfare.

According to Harris (2018), the current view of masculinity in Africa is heavily influenced by colonisation. Pre-colonialism, many African cultures conveyed authority based on age with heavy emphasis on respect for elders, communal responsibility, family organisation and contribution and not based on gender (Ekeke and John, 2025). Pre-colonial era, African women could be warriors as evidenced by the Dahomey warriors who comprised a third of the soldiers (Tucker 1855), and from reports of women kings in south-eastern Nigeria (Achebe, 2003). However, with the introduction of western ideologies where European gender norms coupled with religious beliefs placed sharp emphasis on masculine superiority, authority now became based on gender and not age. African men were given new authority and with it came the unattainable pressure to live up to the '*superior masculinity embodied in white men*' (Ayandele, 1966).

A major African ideology called Ubuntu directly translating to 'I am because we are; and since we are, therefore, I am'. This ideology highlights the theory that an individual's well-being is interconnected with that of the community (Bolden, 2014). This belief is deeply rooted in African culture, guiding all interpersonal relationships. To African men, it guides them that their contributions and actions have a ripple effect that impacts the community, it encourages empathy, community and interconnectedness (Ekeke and John, 2025). However much of the Ubuntu philosophy has been diluted with globalization and modernization

encouraging a culture of individualism, weakening that sense of interconnectedness Africa once cultivated (Lefa, 2015).

Currently, the cultural practice in Nigeria is a combination of local customs and western expectations, where instead of the family contributing together to maintain the home and society, men are expected to control their wives and children and the colonial-period ideal of the men as sole provider and protector is now firmly ingrained in Nigeria. Men who are not able to meet this provider and protector role find their masculinity questioned (Harris, 2018). Men are expected to be the protectors of women and children (the vulnerable), inherently excluding them as possible victims. They are expected to be brave, and this encourages shows of violence to feel included and to prove masculinity (Gillian, 2001; Mensah 2021). However, Chigudu, (2016) argue that African men are now working hard to redefine masculinity working to disentangle themselves from the harmful parts of customary and precolonial masculinity. Dube, (2018) believes that African men are embracing partnership, collaboration with families and gender equality, this indicates adopting the positive interpretations of modern masculinity and customary or cultural masculinity.

A distinctive difference between African masculinity and that of the Global North is Africa's reliance on spiritual relations. Embedded in African culture is the interaction between human beings and ancestors and spirits. Where some human behaviour or as this case calls for, masculine behaviour like violence is accredited or interpreted through spiritual explanations (Mfecane 2024).

Mfecane (2024) calls for a more contextualised application of hegemonic masculinity that recognises Africa's connection to spirituality and community expectations. Ammann and Staudacher (2021) also state that masculinity in relation to Africa research is often produced in Europe and North America while Africa is treated merely as a place where data is collected. They call for Africa-centred research about masculinity to challenge global and academic negative views of African Masculinity suggesting that masculinity in Africa should be understood as dynamic, adaptive, and shaped by structural inequalities and historical forces.

2.4.4. Socio-ecological perspectives

Socio-ecological perspective emphasises the different factors, that is; individual, relational, community, societal factors and the inter-relationships that may interact to put some people at risk for abuse and violence. It is used both in relation to understanding factors that may be

relevant for perpetration of abuse and also factors which may protect survivors from experiencing abuse (Kerman and Betrus, 2020).

According to Rakovec-Felser, (2014), socio-ecological theory suggests that growing up in a violent environment increases the possibility of being a perpetrator of intimate partner violence. While this is not strictly accurate as there are several factors that can put one at risk of being a victim of domestic abuse. As suggested by Kerman and Betrus (2020), this theory suggests that individual and environmental factors influence attitudes and behaviours.

Ifeanyichukwu et al. (2017), also posits that experiences of violence during childhood might be a link to adulthood violent behaviours towards intimate partners. They believe that a child that grows up in a home where abuse occurs, confrontation would be seen as a norm. Oyediran and Feyisetan (2017), also believed childhood exposure to domestic violence makes it more likely for a person to be a victim or perpetrator of violence. However, Ifeanyichukwu et al. (2017) further stated that being exposed to domestic abuse as a child is not a sole factor that can cause one to perpetrate or be a victim of domestic abuse, as it could be one of the factors but not a single factor and so should not be used as a benchmark to understand the existence of domestic abuse.

Kerman and Betrus, (2020) and the United State of America Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in their publication on violence prevention, mentioned that four factors in socio ecological theory influences abuse or violence, they include;

- i. Individual: which identifies that personal history of a person, their attitudes, beliefs and history of abuse can make one more susceptible to abuse.
- ii. Relationship: this recognises that a person's relationship with others, their closest friends and family influences their behaviour and can contribute to how abuse is professed.
- iii. Community: the environment and community a person is exposed to may influence if they will become a perpetrator or victim of domestic abuse. This could be neighbourhoods, schools or even at the workplace. A community that fosters domestic abuse will most like produce people that tolerate abuse.

- iv. Societal: this involves a society with cultures and norms that support and promotes domestic abuse as an acceptable way of resolving conflicts or maintaining order. A climate that promotes abuse as a way of life does not recognise abuse as a crime, making the perpetrators and victims struggle to maintain this view even when they are removed from that environment.

2.5. The different responses to domestic abuse by men and women

Brush 1990, using quantitative analysis from a national sample on violent acts and injurious outcomes in married couples found out that there was no significant difference between men and women's act of committing violence against their intimate partners. Although this discovery can be argued to be outdated, twelve years later Archer in 2002 also asserted that women are more likely to use physical violence against their heterosexual partners and they are also seen to be aggressive more often than men with their partners (Archer 2002), this arguments contrasts with that of Westmarland and Burrell (2023), who believe more focus should be placed on how and why men experience domestic abuse than who commits more violence amongst men and women.

Evidence and research have shown that women suffer more from abuse and the negative physical, psychological and financial consequences of abuse than men, this does not however mean that men do not suffer from serious pain as a result of abuse from their intimate partners (Buttel and Carney, 2005). Huntley et al. (2019) reiterate this by also saying that although women experience more severe abuse than men, men can also suffer abuse from their partners, yet the needs and help for male victims have been overlooked. The way men and women approach, experience and react to domestic abuse are sometimes similar but mostly different and these experiences will be examined in this section.

Firstly, the ways that men and women respond to domestic abuse are different. Abused women usually decide to stay with an abusive partner due to social and economic reliance, researchers believe that some abused women depend heavily on their spouse and leaving their abusive partners causes them distress (Ike et al., 2022). From the Nigerian perspective, Ike et al., (2022) argues that perceived gender roles of men and women in Nigeria are influenced by the culture, Men are considered the bread winner with many women relying solely on their husband, it is considered a norm for a man to stop his spouse from working and being independent. While abused men might not stay in a relationship because of financial

dependency, they might stay because of their shared economic or financial resources and social network and also because of the huge financial strain of having a divorce (Lupri, 1990). But the major reason as reported by several researchers is because of the backlash and embarrassment that abused men fear they will receive for not being the stereotypical strong man that should never be abused, they fear the shame that comes with being an abused man from the society (Hines, 2001 and Buttell and Carney, 2005).

They could also stay for their children, as stated by Langley and Levy (1977), 'abused men' is not relatively common, and as stated above several men will be wary to identify as domestic abuse victims or even try to use that as a reason to obtain custody of their children and will rather stay with their abusive partner to be with their children and to protect their children. As said by (Huntley et al., 2019 and Lupri, 1990) both men and women remain in abusive relationships because they still love their spouse, and they choose to believe the abuses are mistakes especially when the abusive partner apologises and makes promises even though the abuse have become a pattern. Another reason is to maintain the family and their sense of responsibility and dedication to the marriage (ibid.).

Male and female domestic abuse victims are responded to differently by society. Sorenson and Taylor (2005) conducted a survey on male and female abuse in intimate relationships, their results indicated that male-female domestic abuse is judged more harshly than female-male abuse, the study also discovered female-male abuse as less likely to be illegal and abused men to be less likely to need law enforcement intervention. Men also receive more punishment than women even if they were in court under similar circumstances. They also stated that women were viewed less negatively and treated less harshly when they engaged in the same violent behaviours that the men committed (Ibid). The society assumes that people who are physically stronger or bigger cannot be abused, hence making men and women that appear physically stronger that have been abused fear speaking up about their abuse, this thinking stems from the idea that abuse is mainly physical (Huntley et al., 2019). The reason why male-female abuse is more harshly received by the society is because women report more severe consequences of being abused, are more likely to be fearful, more likely to experience abuse as an ongoing pattern of control linked to their inferior status as women (Gadd, 2017; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Stark 2007 and Hester, 2009). Walklate et al., (2022), in a paper that explored male reported experiences of coercive control victimisation, held that many service system responses operated on an assumption of female victimisation and male perpetration. The responses of many to the male victims that approached them,

resulted in them either being ignored, or told ‘to be men, to man up, deal with it, or just outrightly told to change their behaviour.

In general, there are fewer specialised services available for men who experience domestic abuse. According to Huntley et al., (2019) several men are not aware that there are services available for male victims. McCarrick et al., (2016) explains how domestic abuse services are promoted for women, stating how the headquarters of a domestic abuse unit erected a huge banner of a big man hitting a woman and how this made male victims feels invisible as victims. Majority of domestic abuse services are for women and many offer single sex services and do not have provisions for male victims of domestic abuse (Huntley et al., 2019).

Finally, experiences by men in the LGBTQ+ community on societal responses when they reported domestic abuse. According to Hogan (2021) some gay men experienced ‘a lack of sensitivity, understanding and compassion’ when reporting domestic abuse; he further stated that LGBTQ+ help seekers were usually met with a lack of understanding and got a sense that the services were heterosexual focused. This is similar to sentiments by Huntley et al, (2019).

2.5.1. Effects of Domestic Abuse

The effect domestic abuse has on people varies. Female victims are more likely to report experiencing fear while male victims might be more likely to report shame (Shorey et al., 2011; Hines, 2022). Many victims of abuse are physically injured, with injuries including broken bones, noses and teeth. However, most victims of domestic abuse suffer psychological (coercive control) and emotional pain which cannot be physically seen, this includes depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, insomnia, eating disorders, hypervigilance, irritability, alcohol and drug abuse, suicidal thoughts and self-harm (Walklate eta al., 2022, Hines and Malley-Morrison, 2001, Walker, 1993 and Kilpatrick, 1990). As stated by Hines and Malley-Morrison (2001) literature on the cause or effects of domestic abuse fail to acknowledge that the symptoms exhibited by male victims of domestic abuse can be caused by a different variable, the symptoms might be caused by an entirely different factor besides from domestic abuse and as she stated this can only be properly ascertained with a longitudinal study.

While it is well established that women are more likely to be victims of domestic abuse and are more likely to suffer from the effects of domestic abuse, men are less likely to not

acknowledge they have been abused and so the effects are more difficult to ascertain or treat unlike that of women (Hines, 2001).

According to Ameh et al. (2012), awareness of domestic abuse is the first step to combatting domestic abuse. Awareness on what constitutes domestic abuse will help in better reporting and policy making to help reduce domestic abuse not only to men but women too. Men are not ready to speak up on domestic abuse and the few that do report to a third party usually keep it in the family. They are hesitant to report also because being psychological abuse, they have no evidence to show of the abuse. Examples of such abusive words includes being called; impotent, a failure, a coward, a useless man, etc. (Olatunji et al., 2023). It is important to note that the most common reasons for women killing their partners are because they themselves are victims of domestic abuse (Stuart et al., 2006 and Hines, 2001).

2.5.2. Female perpetrators of domestic abuse and victimization of male victims

This section will examine female offenders of domestic abuse against men and how the label victim might isolate men.

‘Women are not all innocent or victims. Women can be very different from each other, partly because of the cultural context and other circumstances of their lives. Men are not all coercive or violent. Both men and women are inconsistent, and complex, and can change’ (McHugh, 2005). This statement by McHugh is the basis for this section. However, it should be noted that not every researcher agrees with this finding. As stated by Hines (2001), men are more economically independent and powerful especially over women, making women more susceptible to abuse as some of them rely on their men. There is no denying that most of the recorded domestic abuse cases are male-female abuse, however, many men are victims of female-male abuse as well but are reluctant to be associated with such title of being a victim because ‘men are supposed to be the physical dominant and aggressive partner, admitting to being victimized by a woman will be considered weak and emasculating’ (Ibid. and Steinmetzy, 1977). Traditionally, women are seen as peaceful and nurturing, rarely susceptible to acts of abuse, Glass and Hassounech, (2008), queries this assumption in regard to experiences of domestic abuse by bisexual and lesbian women, because of this stereotype, domestic abuse by women is not easily recognised. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in America, 97% of men who experienced rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner had only female perpetrators.

Hester et al. 2015, believes that men's experiences of domestic abuse can be best explained as negative behaviours, which can sometimes be violent but is primarily a result of earlier perpetrated abuse by them on women which Stuart et al. (2006) explains is mostly as a result of self-defence, anger, retaliation or provocation by women on men. However, Hines (2001) argues that not all domestic abuse by women on men are as a result of self-defence or retaliation, she believes that several times abuse by women is motivated by anger, hurt, stress, confusion, jealousy and a need for control. Adebayo and Iweala (2022) in their article researching on the construction of masculinity in cases of domestic violence on men believed that people in general can be violent and women are not excluded, women are as equally motivated to initiate violence as men, they also believed that domestic abuse can occur when there is a shift in traditional family structures, when women are more independent and are more aware of their rights and can strike back when abused by men.

According to the Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency report (2021) in Nigeria, two methods that abusive women use are denial and departure, both of which act on the fear of loss. They threaten or take things away, such as meals, money, sex, children or themselves. They may also take away approval, dignity and reputation. The woman may also threaten to tell others what a bad person the man is (most people will more easily believe that the man, rather than the woman, is the abuser). Children often are a powerful lever, with some abusive women threatening to take the children and cutting off contact with the men. These creates fear as most men know that divorce settlements are more likely to award custody to the woman (The Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team, 2016).

There is an assumption that men underreport their involvement in perpetrating abuse against their intimate partners, and overreports their victimization experience (Dobash and Dobash, 2004). However, this statement goes against much recent evidence that states that men are reluctant to share their experiences as victims of domestic abuse (Buttel and Carney, 2005). While David Gadd (2017) believes that some men can be victims of domestic abuse, he states that social researchers have barely found enough male victims of domestic abuse to warrant substantial investment in shelters for male victims.

Huntley et al, (2019) conducted a systematic review and qualitative evidence synthesis on help seeking by male victims of domestic violence, he found that masculinity played a big role in men asking for help after being domestically abused, he believed that there was a connection between masculinity and male victims of domestic abuse feeling invisible,

vulnerable and not seeking help. Meaning these men felt invisible as victims of domestic abuse seeking help from services, they had trouble acknowledging themselves as victims of abuse, they had a fear of disclosure, not being believed, shame, they lacked confidence in speaking out, and mostly the fear of not being believed and being accused of perpetrating the abuse themselves.

2.5.3. Criminalisation of homosexuality in Nigeria

Domestic abuse can occur in all relationships, and this includes heterosexual and homosexual relationships (Rakovec-Felser, 2014). There are few publications on the prevalence of domestic abuse against homosexual men in Nigeria and West Africa as a whole, but this is due to the criminalisation of homosexuality in many West African countries (Ogunbajo et al., 2020). Because of the criminalisation of homosexuality in Nigeria (Section 214 of the Criminal Code Act, Section 5(1) Same Sex Prohibition Act) and most African countries, there are no platforms available for victims making it very difficult to find any support and inadvertently escalating the risk of domestic violence against all homosexuals in Nigeria (Olajire et al., 2019). While domestic abuse occurs among gay couples by their male partners, studies have found that the majority of domestic abuse against men is perpetrated by the women against their male partners (Prospero and Fawson, 2010; Hines et al; 2007).

2.6. Understanding Domestic Abuse against men in Nigeria

This section provides an understanding of the factors that can influence the occurrence of domestic abuse, analysing the individual and societal factors that contributes to domestic abuse. It is worthy to note that many of these factors are disputed and highly contested. It should be noted that the factors provided are not presented as reasons for domestic abuse but are instead provided as factors that can exacerbate domestic abuse;

Adetoro and Adetoro, (2021) in their study on protection available for male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria, suggests that Nigeria's socio-cultural factors have contributed to the prevalence of domestic violence in Nigeria. This socio-cultural factor includes; cultural definition of gender roles, expectations and entitlements in relationships, dominance of men, belief of family disputes as a private matter and the acceptance of violence as a means of correction. Ifeanyichukwu et al., (2017), explained that, in Nigeria, reporting domestic abuse comes with social stigmatization. The culture in Nigeria beliefs that family life should be sacred and sacrosanct and the workings or the issues in a marriage must be kept protected. When a partner divulges issues of abuse in their relationship, instead of them to be met with

acceptance and support by the society, they face embarrassment, rebuke, corrections on what to do be better spouses and family members twisting the complaints out of proportion (Olatunji et al; 2023). Ifeanyichukwu et al; (2017), further stated that a culture of silence is practiced when it comes to domestic violence because of the stigma, shame and shun associated with victims of domestic violence. This scorn is especially experienced by male victims because of Nigeria's cultural definition of a strong and powerful man. Toxic masculinity runs deep in Nigeria, and the culture is informed by patriarchy, women are perceived to be unworthy of respect and any attempt of the woman to resist is usually met with encouraged abuse. The limited value placed on the women in Nigeria nurtures the need for control. This leads to lack of female independence and inadvertently makes them subject to enduring domestic abuse (Ike et al., 2022). This culture contributes to domestic abuse because when a spouse knows that their abuse will go unreported, there is nothing stopping them from continuing as they will not be punished or rebuked for it and the victim cannot do anything about it. Akangbe, 2020 asserts that culture and religion are closely intertwined in Nigeria, and people use religion as well as culture to justify domestic abuse. Fortune and Enger, (2005) opines that the church encourages silence and prayer to deal with domestic abuse, and encourages victims to remain in abusive relationships, try to be better spouses, learn to forgive and forget so as not to break their home, this is usually backed with bible verses (Akangbe, 2020).

In an interview carried out by Zikoko magazine with men about their experience on being victims of abuse in romantic relationships found that the men have a shared concern about defending themselves or reporting the women who abuse them at the risk of being made out to be abusers as well or, worse, being viewed as the ones who instigated the abuse in the first place (Vincent, 2021). It should be noted that some victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria, see domestic abuse as a sign of love (Enemo, 2018). Kolbe and Büttner, in their study of the prevalence and risk factors associated with domestic violence against men identified some triggers of domestic violence against men as accusations of unfaithfulness, financial worries, underlying mental disorders. In Nigeria and many African countries, domestic violence is accepted and when criticized, the women are mostly blamed for provocation (Oyediran and Feyisetan, 2017). According to Oyediran and Feyisetan, (2017), Heavy drinking and drug usage by both men and women can lead to a higher risk of violence. However, the underlying factors that cause domestic abuse in Nigeria require further exploration, looking at the characteristics of the victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse does not provide a full

picture as to the cause of domestic abuse. The context, circumstance and environment also need to be analysed for a better understanding on the cause of domestic abuse (Oyediran, 2017). Obi and Ozumba, 2007 also argued that there is a high connection between domestic abuse and heavy drinking, spouse unemployment and poverty. They specifically believed though, that domestic abuse against men by women is linked to financial independence of women, women being educated and wealthy and powerful in-laws. Dobash and Dobash were amongst the first feminist criminologists to write about domestic violence in 1979 and they explained that many abused women pushed abusers away or hit back because they were both angry and wanted to protect themselves and that violence among couples will continue to exist in relationships as long as conflicts about jealousy, housework and money is continuously laden with threats.

Poverty is another factor that can contribute to domestic abuse, it may occur when both or either spouse struggles to meet ends meet mostly because of the loss of a job or just the lack of finance, this leads to short tempers, guilt, feelings of inadequacy among partners and this can lead to domestic abuse among partners (Ifeanyichukwu, Christopher and Kizito, 2017). Okoye et al., (2018) disputed this claim in their study on the influence of socio-economic factors on domestic violence among married people and claimed that socio-economic factors had no influence on domestic violence.

Alcohol and drug use is a contributing factor to domestic violence in the family because alcohol lowers inhibition therefore increasing violent behaviours. Overconsumption of alcohol increases the tendency of a person to pick fights, instigate arguments and use foul words which leads to violent clashes between spouses (Ifeanyichukwu, Christopher and Kizito, 2017).

Ifeayichukwu et al., (2017) believes that sometimes when a woman earns more than her husband, they emasculate their husband making them feel bad, worthless and questioning their manhood. A woman being financially independence should not be a factor that contributes to domestic abuse unless the woman uses this as a means of psychological abuse by humiliating, insulting or emasculating their partner because of that.

Some literatures have identified women's exposure to violence and revenge as a contributor to domestic abuse. This can be explained using one of the elements of Johnson's typology of intimate partner violence, known as violent resistance and it refers to the violence used mostly by women to resist the violence and control of an intimate terrorist (one who uses

tactics to control the partner, mostly men) (Johnson, 2010). Johnson in his book gave three types of violence and believed the first two types were driven by the need to control in intimate relationships by both men and women, the second type of violence which is most relevant to this subtopic is called violent resistance, is about how women struggle to take control by responding with violence to their intimate partner after they have been exposed to violence by their intimate partner (Johnson, 2010; Hardesty, 2009). Violent resistance which is as a result of women's exposure to violence occurs when a domestic abuse victim, usually a woman commits violence in self-defence towards her coercive controlling and physically violent partner (Johnson, 2010). According to Swan et al. (2008), about 86% of women who commit domestic abuse are also victims of domestic abuse and are motivated to act violently as self-defence, out of fear, to regain control, revenge or to escape. Violent resistance is not an excuse to justify violent behaviour or domestic abuse perpetrated by women against men, but it is useful for better understanding factors that contribute to domestic abuse and can help law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and advocacy groups better serve those accused of domestic abuse (Durfee, 2011). According to Swan et al., (2008), Children that have been exposed to violence see intimate partner violence as normal and would most probably repeat this as an adult with their spouse, this exposure contributes to domestic abuse, this matches with the findings by several Nigerian authors. Church-Hill, (2021), a Nigerian author suggested that children raised in abusive homes might grow up to be abusive, he cited it as an environmental factor, believing that environments where children are raised affects them negatively or positively, he stated further that children learn fast and if they are exposed to violence actively, they accept it as normal. Olatunji et al., (2023), also found that a contributing factor to female perpetrated domestic abuse is childhood exposure to violence, he stated that females exposed to domestic abuse are more inclined to abuse their partners in the future. In a report by the Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency in Nigeria for Punch Newspaper in 2023, the report stated that children that did not receive psychological support after experiencing abuse were at risk of being abusers themselves. This was based on a survey conducted on 140 sex convicts of which 80.5% of them had been abused as children. These views have however been discredited by several authors.

In Nigerian research by Akangbe (2020), infidelity was highlighted as a factor that contributes to domestic abuse, many of the reported domestic abuse cases perpetrated by women against men are because of infidelity. In Nigeria, the attitude towards infidelity by men is cavalier and they believe it is a right that should not be checked, this causes a high rate

of cheating by men. As a response, women are usually suspicious, jealous and jaded making them react violently when faced with cheating spouses with some going to the extent of pouring harmful chemical substances, cutting of their spouse's genitals, stabbing and killing (Akangbe, 2020). Okoye et al., (2018), assessed how infidelity and socio-economic status influenced domestic abuse among married people in Nigeria, focusing on staff at Nnamdi Azikiwe University and they posited that couples who engage in infidelity have more tendency to domestic violence than couples that do not engage in infidelity, suggesting an association between infidelity and the tendency to participate in domestic abuse, however they went further to state that this might be due to the lack of self-control among the perpetrators which can be linked to the occurrence of both the infidelity and domestic violence.

Ultimately, Nigeria's peculiar socio-cultural dynamic has sometimes contributed to the prevalence of domestic abuse, hence the need to focus on Nigerian literature. While there are still intersections between Nigerian and international literatures on understanding domestic abuse against men, like the emphasis on gender roles and gender expectations in societies that can delay help seeking for male victims of domestic abuse, some of the international literature findings may require contextual adaptation and may not fully capture Nigeria's unique context.

2.7. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, domestic abuse is complex, and the various forms of domestic abuse are interrelated and are based on power and control (Candela, 2016). Domestic abuse is a result of gender inequality and patriarchal societies, and anybody can experience being a victim. The experience of domestic abuse however differs between genders and occurs in varying degrees. While there is now a recognition of domestic abuse against men. There is a huge distinction in the experiences by men, the impacts and effects and the motivations of domestic abuse against men. Men can be said to experience more verbal and psychological abuse and women experience more physical abuse.

This chapter highlighted how both men and women experience domestic abuse and recognises that women experience more abuse than men, but it exposed the debate on the importance of specialized resources and services for male victims in Nigeria. It is important to highlight that in Nigeria, despite the existence of laws and policies that regulate domestic abuse, culturally and religiously domestic abuse is highly tolerated as couples are advised to

keep marital issues private (Igwe, 2015). Several literatures posited that Hegemonic masculinity is the main cause of the shame and stigma attached to male victims and men are less likely to acknowledge they have been abused, this norm has made it difficult for men to identify with being victims, thereby aggravating men's suffering (Hogan, et al., 2022). The section also highlighted assumptions especially by service providers and it showed the harm hegemonic masculinity has on the society, as the agencies that are supposed to help are contributing to the damage, promoting a preconceived notion of what and how a man is supposed to be and what he is allowed to experience.

Therefore, this thesis aims to explore the services available for male victims and the social cultural factors in Nigeria that affects the response to domestic abuse against men in Nigeria, while combatting the stereotypes that men cannot be victims.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0. Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the methodological approach used to address the aims and questions of this research. The research questions are as follows;

1. How do key stakeholders/service responders understand and explain domestic abuse against men in Nigeria?
2. How do social-cultural factors influence the way key stakeholders/service responders' respond to domestic abuse against men in Nigeria?
3. What do the key stakeholders/service responders think are the main challenges in responding to male victims of domestic abuse?
4. What is the current legal framework for addressing domestic abuse in Nigeria and how adequate is it for addressing domestic abuse against men in Nigeria?

The research strategy adopted in this thesis is qualitative research method. The qualitative research design entails a set of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders or experts that handle domestic abuse in Nigeria to determine their understanding, experiences and challenges with dealing with male victims of domestic abuse and the services available to male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria. A mapping out of the current legislative framework in Nigeria was conducted, it involved the analysis of relevant legislations, academic articles and documents on domestic abuse to determine the position of the law and how it deals with domestic abuse against men in Nigeria.

The main aim of this research is to explore service responses available to male victims of domestic abuse against the backdrop of social-cultural and religious factors in Nigeria. It also seeks to explore the current legislation and policies addressing domestic abuse against men in Nigeria.

A secondary aim of this research is to develop academic and social understanding of responses to male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria and to determine the adequacy of the available policies and legislation addressing male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria. This study also aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge deepening insight on domestic abuse against men in order to enhance academic and social awareness and to influence law reforms to be more inclusive of male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria.

This chapter will be divided into sections, where I will first reflect on my background in law and navigating a new research methodology in social science; my initial bias, preconceived notions and assumptions; the rationale for my research design, methodology and method; research participants and their characteristics; the difficulties I encountered during data collection; ethical considerations and the data analysis process.

3.0.1. Assumptions of the researcher

It is important that researchers are reflexive about their positionality and any prior assumptions that they may have so that they consider how this may influence their study from design through to analysis and conclusions, this strengthens research rather than weakening it or making it biased.

Coming from a legal background, undertaking social science research is a new experience. My previous research centred on analysing the law, finding inadequacies and providing recommendations. I had only conducted desk research, and this is my first time conducting qualitative research and examining people's experiences and points of view.

It is a well-established fact that women are overwhelming the victims of domestic abuse. And as a woman, I know what it feels like to sometimes feel vulnerable and unheard. However, one of the driving points that motivated me to take on this topic amongst other things is the preconceived and stereotypical notion that women are weak, agreeable and gentle, while men are strong, brave and tough (Kofman and Dukats, 1988). My assumption is that this belief has moulded the way the society responds to victims of abuse and that was my motivation for this thesis. My view is that men are not viewed as possible victims of domestic abuse because of preconceived notions about women and men and the and there is gender inequality in the provision of services for male victims of domestic abuse.

My primary motivation is a commitment to discover the barriers to help seeking experienced by male victims of domestic abuse through the societies or service providers (in the form of experts and key stakeholders) experiences with dealing with male victims of domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse against men is not equivalent to the widespread practice of domestic abuse against women and so while I believe women should be given priority and support, I adopt that little is known about service provision for male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria, which is the gap my research is trying to fill.

3.1. Research Design

3.1.1. Research Paradigm

Research paradigm is the philosophical framework that research is based on. It consists of ontology, epistemology and research methodology. While ontology answers the question ‘what is reality?’, epistemology answers ‘how do we know reality?’ it is the method of acquiring knowledge and finally research methodology answers the question ‘how do we go about discovering the answer or reality?’ (Clarke, 2021).

The ontological position driving this research is constructivism because the varied and subjective reality is socially constructed and is influenced by the society. This approach is founded on the belief that reality is shaped by shared meanings and interpretations (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). This research has multiple realities, because there are multiple answers/realities in response to my research question and these realities are socially constructed.

This ontological approach, is grounded in an appreciation that there are several perspectives and understandings from society on responses to male victims of domestic abuse, the epistemological approach questions how it is possible to get these perspectives and understanding that determine the responses to male victims of domestic abuse, while the research methodology deciphers the process by which these responses to male victims of domestic abuse are discovered.

The epistemological position driving this research is interpretivism which states that reality is subjective, and it varies or differs from person to person. This approach is founded on the belief that reality is subjective, fluid and socially constructed (Chowdhury, 2014). An Interpretivist approach was adopted in this research. This approach is a humanistic approach and is best adopted by qualitative researchers because its primary goal is to see things from the perspective of human actors. (Chowdhury, 2014). However, there have been criticism that this approach tends to be subjective therefore making the research findings subject to the researcher’s bias. Nonetheless, this approach is more appropriate for this research because it allows for a deeper understanding and the ability to measure human experiences from a particular sector rather than limiting it to generalised findings as the positivist approach (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

These approaches are the most appropriate for addressing the research questions because interpretivism assumes that reality is subjective and socially constructed. The research methods and questions seek to understand various people's perspectives and how their experiences shape their varied responses. That is to say we can only understand someone's reality through their experience of that reality, which may be different from another person's and is shaped by the individuals' historical or social perspective. This is closely associated with qualitative methods of data collection, and this is what led me to adopt a qualitative research method (Pham, 2018).

3.1.2. Research methodology and rationale

The research strategy chosen is qualitative analysis. Qualitative analysis is adopted for this thesis because it provides rich descriptions of complex phenomena, illuminating the experiences and interpretation of events by actors with widely differing stakes and roles (Sofaer, 1999).

Qualitative research is usually conducted to explore and understand other people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes and interactions and the meaning they give to their experiences. Qualitative researchers often cannot find adequate information to begin to formulate a theory about the phenomena and this exploration produces answers; engaging in qualitative research helps to develop theory (Morse and Field, 1996 and Silverman, 1998).

A qualitative approach was considered most appropriate because the study sought to explore personal experiences, perceptions, and meanings attached to male victimisation within intimate relationships. Given the sensitive nature of domestic abuse and the cultural stigma surrounding male victimhood, qualitative interviews provided opportunities for participants to explain their experiences in depth and within their social and cultural contexts.

Although a quantitative survey may have enabled the collection of data from a larger sample and potentially increased anonymity, it would have been less effective in capturing the complexities of participants lived experiences. The qualitative approach therefore allowed for a richer understanding of how male victims experience and respond to domestic abuse in Nigeria. This limitation does not weaken the study but reflects a methodological choice aligned with the study's objectives.

Qualitative research requires that the researcher distinguishes between another's world and one's own yet become close enough to the lives of another that it be both experienced and

analysed. It requires that the researcher be able to conceptualize, write and communicate (Morse and Field, 1996). However, a major criticism of qualitative research is the researcher's tendency to be biased and influence the research and findings to include what they want to see. Nonetheless, bias in qualitative research can be reduced by adopting appropriate analytical processes, such as Trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify the criteria for ensuring trustworthiness are; Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability.

Qualitative research proposes to examine the ideas and feelings of those being interviewed or observed. Qualitative approaches are used in order to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes and interactions and the meaning they give to their experiences (Olafson et al., 2014).

I am guided by feminist perspectives and the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which influenced how I related with this research. Hegemonic masculinity promotes certain gender expectations from men and women, while feminist perspectives, amongst other things, examines how gender roles and expectations has contributed to domestic abuse. Feminist perspectives and hegemonic masculinity informed my interview questions and my analytical approach.

3.1.3. Legislative Mapping

The legislative mapping was conducted to identify and analyse laws, policies, and regulatory frameworks relating to gender-based violence (GBV) and domestic abuse in Nigeria. Relevant documents were identified through searches of government websites, legal databases, academic literature, reports from international organisations, and policy documents. The identified legislation was organised chronologically and thematically to examine how domestic abuse and GBV have been defined, regulated, and governed over time. This process enabled an understanding of the legal protections available to victims, the extent to which male victimisation is recognised, and gaps within existing legal frameworks.

The legislative review also acknowledges the colonial origins of some Nigerian laws relating to domestic abuse. For example, provisions within the Penal Code, which came into force shortly before Nigeria's independence in 1960, reflected colonial legal approaches and included provisions that permitted wife beating under certain circumstances. Although legal reforms have occurred since independence, some colonial-era legal influences continue to shape contemporary understandings and governance of GBV in Nigeria. While a full

postcolonial analysis is beyond the scope of this study, recognising this provides important context for understanding how domestic abuse has developed historically.

The review further considered national policies addressing GBV. Although many policy documents use gender-neutral and inclusive language, implementation often remains focused primarily on women and girls. Consequently, male victims frequently remain invisible within service provision and responses and public awareness campaigns despite policy frameworks that may not explicitly exclude them.

3.1.4. Research method and rationale

The experiences of male victims of domestic abuse are very important to this thesis but because of the sensitivity of domestic abuse especially with men, male victim participants will not be involved in this research. Men who experience domestic abuse may feel ashamed and are afraid to report for fear of being ostracized or judged by Nigeria's highly religious and tribal society. Nigeria is a highly patriarchal society which has contributed to high rates of toxic masculinity, where men will be shunned for being weak or less of a man if they ever report about experiencing domestic abuse (Adetoro and Adetoro, 2021). This makes it difficult to access male victims, therefore key stakeholders or experts that have direct involvement with male victims were interviewed to explore their understandings and experiences in dealing with male victims of domestic abuse.

Qualitative data collection methods in particular focus groups and interviews were used to explore stakeholder's views and opinions. Focus group discussions and interviews methods are most appropriate to determine people's perceptions and values (Nyumba et al., 2018).

Focus group discussion was the most appropriate method adopted in this thesis because I was interested in finding how major stakeholder's that deal with domestic abuse interact, understanding the group's dynamics and the interaction that takes place in the group, this method was particularly useful for exploring this stakeholders experiences and was used to examine not only what they think but how they think and why they think that way (Kitzinger, 1995). The focus group discussions were able to answer the research questions by drawing from the personal beliefs, perceptions of the participants through a moderated interaction (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995 and Nyumba et al., 2018). The importance of focus group discussion to this thesis was that I was able to interact with the participants as a group encouraging them to talk to one another: asking questions, exchanging anecdotes and

commenting on each other's experiences and points of view while I acted as the moderator (Kitzinger, 1995).

The focus group discussions involved a dialogue with the Local Chiefs/Community stakeholders, and this method of research is used because it is more appropriate and accessible to meet them all together as it was done during their weekly community dialogue meetings with the community. I was also able to get a more robust insight into their experiences and opinions as they discuss and debate over the issues being discussed during the focus group discussions.

Interviews are a versatile form of qualitative data collection used by researchers across the social sciences. It was particularly helpful in this research because it allowed individuals to explain, in their own words, how they understood and interpreted domestic abuse against men (Knott et al., 2022).

Interviews were adopted in this research, because interviews provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative methods and was most appropriate in this research because detailed insights were required from the individual participants to help answer the research questions. Because of the sensitivity of domestic abuse, interviews were particularly appropriate especially where participants may not want to talk about such issues in a group environment (Gill et al., 2008).

The interview consists of a session with representatives from law enforcement, advocacy groups/ NGO and judicial officers. This method of data collection is used because I was able to meet the participants one on one at their convenience and allowed for an in-depth discussion and permits for questions to be tweaked and tailored to each participant depending on how the interview went. Interviews also helped me better understand each participant's experiences, behaviour and opinions as the questions were open ended. Interviews were preferable for this group because it was not easy to bring this set of participants together for focus groups discussions as the local chiefs.

Interviews and focus group discussions give the opportunity to explore the experiences of participants and to probe further on their responses and discussions without too much restriction. Both the spoken and unspoken response can be captured during interviews leading to a richer and more robust data. Both interviews and focus group discussion permit for the questions to be tailored to fit the participants (Michell, 1999).

3.2. Data collection

The study initially aimed to recruit 25 participants. However, 21 interviews were ultimately completed. Several potential participants declined participation after learning that the research focused on male victims of domestic abuse. This reluctance was itself a significant finding, reflecting prevailing societal attitudes that often do not recognise male victimisation as a legitimate issue requiring research attention in contemporary Nigeria.

Interviews were conducted in formal English and in few instances, broken English. To preserve cultural meaning and context, selected participant quotations are presented in both their original form and the translated English version used in the analysis.

Data collection took place in Lagos State, Nigeria. Lagos state is chosen because it currently has the highest number of agencies and policies dealing with domestic abuse in Nigeria. Data collection took place with 21 participants who have direct contact with victims of domestic abuse. Each interview and focus group discussion lasted approximately between 60 – 90 minutes. In total, 11 interviews were carried out: two law enforcement officers from the Nigerian Police Force, five participants from the Judiciary and four advocacy groups representatives of the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency. The remaining 10 participants are from the community stakeholders (local chiefs, personnel counsellors and local faith leaders in a religious health care centre), and the data was collected by 2 sets of focus group discussions with five participants in each focus group. The above groups are chosen to be participants because they are key stakeholders involved in matters involving domestic abuse in Nigeria and have a direct connection to victims of domestic abuse and will provide a clear access and insight into the societal response to domestic abuse.

The interviews and focus group discussions were recorded on my phone and were protected with passwords before they were transferred to my secured university laptop. Recordings were deleted upon completion of transcriptions. NVivo 14 was used for analysis of data collected.

3.2.1. Characteristics of participants

The demographic information collected from the participants were their job roles, years of experience, gender and organisation type. Most of the participants were heads of departments in their organisation with an array of work experiences.

The years of experience and gender of the participants did not appear to influence the responses provided during the interviews and focus group discussions; however, their job roles and organisation type was a determinant in their approach and responses towards domestic abuse against men and this will be discussed subsequently. It is therefore important to note the job titles of the participants in the advocacy group, and they are; the head of empowerment, head of fields operation, head of legal services and the head of case management. The table 1 below shows the participants job roles, years of experience, gender and organisation type. The table also includes the participants ID, which is used to protect the identity of the participants. The identifiers are linked to each group interviewed and discussed with; AG stands for Advocacy group, JD for Judiciary, LE for law enforcement and CS for community stakeholder.

TABLE 1: OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS

Participant's ID	Job role	Years of experience	Gender	Organization type	Method
AG 1	Head of department	2	Female	Advocacy group	Interview
AG 2	Head of department	7	Female	Advocacy group	Interview
AG 3	Head of department	6	Female	Advocacy group	Interview
AG 4	Head of department	7	Female	Advocacy group	Interview
JD 1	Judge	1	Female	Judiciary	Interview
JD 2	Magistrate	6	Male	Judiciary	Interview
JD 3	Judge	8	Male	Judiciary	Interview
JD 4	Judge	20	Female	Judiciary	Interview
JD 5	Director	6	Male	Judiciary	Interview
LE 1	Police officer	20+	Male	Law	Interview

				enforcement	
LE 2	Police officer	10	Male	Law enforcement	Interview
CS 1	Religious support centre professionals	12 10 15 14 30+	Female Female Male Male Female	Community Stakeholders	Focus Group Discussion (Five people)
CS 2	Local chiefs	Not disclosed	All Male	Community Stakeholders	Focus Group Discussion (Five People)

3.2.1.1. Recruitment

Twenty-five participants were initially expected to be recruited for focus group discussions and interviews, however 21 participants were eventually recruited and used for this research due to some recruitment challenges. This can be attributed to the low response rate from law enforcement officers despite numerous outreach efforts.

As stated above, the participants for this study are law enforcement officers, Local Chiefs/ community stakeholders, advocacy groups and members of the judiciary and slightly different recruitment methods were adopted for each group. Initial recruitment of members of the judiciary was through a gatekeeper (a senior judge) who was asked to distribute information about the research; thereafter I offered to meet with them to discuss the research and provide the participation information sheet and consent form. Further judicial participants were recruited using a snowball sampling strategy. A formal letter of request was submitted to the Registrar of the Court and approved before the interview commenced.

Law enforcement officers were contacted directly by email and telephone, after which they were provided with the participation information sheet and consent form before appointments for the interviews were booked.

Advocacy groups were contacted by email through the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency, a specialized organisation with specialist training to provide services to victims of domestic and sexual violence in Lagos State, Nigeria. They were contacted directly by email and were approached through these channels to book appointments with them to discuss the research and provide the participation information sheet and consent forms. Local chiefs/community stakeholders were contacted directly during their weekly dialogue sessions with the community (Oba in council), where they welcome discussions on issues in the community. All the participants except the local chiefs/ community stakeholders (that is, the Judiciary, law enforcement officers and advocacy groups) were contacted via email and phone.

A major problem encountered during recruitment was finding advocacy groups and non-governmental organisations interested in being participants in research on domestic abuse with men as possible victims of domestic abuse. Many of the groups stated they only worked with women and did not have any insight on male victims of domestic abuse. There was also difficulty in recruiting police officers, five law enforcement officers were initially intended to be interviewed but only two were provided by the police force and this was after a lot of bureaucratic red tape and push arounds by the force.

It is worthy of note to mention that during the course of the data collection, an advocacy group called the Men Help Centre was identified, this was the only support service in Nigeria that was centred on male victims of domestic abuse. The help centre was identified through a news report by a publishing company called The Cable that reported on the available resource for men suffering from domestic violence.

However, every effort to contact the group failed, their phone number was dormant, all emails sent to them bounced back, their physical address was vacant and their social media accounts had been inactive since January 2021. I also contacted the journalist that reported on the group, but he stated that he had corresponded with them through their email in 2020 when he wrote about them, and he did not have any means of contacting them or why they closed up without notice. This group was a step in the right direction as it was the only service that

specifically provided for male victims of domestic abuse and unfortunately there is no way to find out why they closed up and how effective their service was to the Nigerian community.

This highlights a major obstacle encountered during the recruitment of advocacy groups during the data collection phase of this research, many of the service providers were unwilling to engage in the research when informed the research focused on male victims. They categorically mentioned that their organisation did not deal with male victims and lacked the necessary resources to provide services for men.

It should be noted that the method of recruitment in Nigeria is quite different than in the United Kingdom, I am aware that formal permission is required to approach the Judiciary and Police in Scotland, the required permissions as mandated in Nigeria were obtained before the interview with the Judicial officers.

3.2.1.2. Gatekeepers

Recruitment of members of the judiciary was through a gatekeeper (a senior judge) who was asked to distribute information about the research; thereafter I met with them to discuss the research and provide the participation information sheet and consent form. Due to the challenges of recruiting the Judiciary in Nigeria, I used a gatekeeper, drawing upon my experience as a lawyer in Nigeria who has networked with other law professionals in the field.

According to Hoenig (2015), a gatekeeper is an individual or collective actor who is in a position to control access to resources and rewards relevant in a particular social system. Gatekeeping is relevant in social science especially if the research involves powerful bureaucracies and organisations (ibid). Gatekeepers are important because they help provide access to organisations that might otherwise will be very difficult to access.

However, a characteristic of a gatekeeper is reciprocity, determined by what benefits they can get before helping out and this has raised a lot of debate on the authenticity of the research gotten when gatekeepers have been used in research (Broadhead and Rist, 1976). Another major debate with gatekeepers is their great influence on controlling and limiting the collection of data, a researcher can find restrictions placed on the time span, depth, and scope of the investigation. The role and influence of gatekeepers in social science has been the subject of multiple debates and remains a challenge for many researchers (Singh and Wassenaar, 2016).

The ethical problem with using a gatekeeper is because it might be difficult for colleagues, to decline research participation when being recruited by a colleague. This could compromise the voluntariness of research participation and thus undermine the voluntary informed consent requirement and damage the quality of data that will be gotten (Singh and Wassenaar, 2016).

It should be noted that during the course of this data collection with the judiciary, the gatekeeper did not require any reciprocity from me and was very happy to introduce me to fellow judges in the family court. There was also no pressure on the participants to participate in the research. The gatekeeper discussed the details of my research with a group of their colleagues and provided them with (the participation sheet and consent form). Participants were given the freedom to decide whether they wanted to partake in the research. Therefore, the ethical problem on the difficulty of colleagues to decline research participation was eliminated as the participants were given the opportunity to volunteer after being properly informed about the research and they were also informed that their decision to partake or not partake in the research would not impact their relationship with the gatekeeper. Furthermore, before the interviews they were expressly informed about their ability to drop out of the interview at any time without consequence if they were uncomfortable. It is also important to note that the gatekeeper was not present when consent was obtained nor during the interviews. All these steps were taken to mitigate the risk of the participants being pressured or compelled to take part in the research because of their relationship with the gatekeeper.

3.3. Ethics

The fieldwork was undertaken in my home country of Nigeria. An ethics application was submitted to the University of Glasgow College of Social Sciences ethics committee, and I was approved to go on to conduct my research.

Informed consent was obtained in writing from all participants in advance of any interviews/focus groups and full information about the research was provided. All data are anonymised using pseudonyms. Participants were asked if they had a preference for how they would like to be referred to and all responses and comments made by participants are made non-attributable. Only the broad job role and gender of participants were recorded, with no other identifying information documented.

Personal data that were collected included; Organisations, role/job titles, gender, time in role, consent form, audio recording of interview or focus group. Hard copies of consent forms and

audio recordings were stored, under lock and key, in my university office. Audio recordings were used for checking interview / focus group transcripts during analysis, but to preserve the anonymity of participants, they were not made available for use by others, and the audio recordings were deleted as soon as the transcript was completed. All personal data are confidential, anonymised and dealt with ethically and in compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR. All personal data which links participants to data will be securely destroyed on completion of the project.

That said, it is possible that people reading the thesis may be able to identify experiences, opinions, languages or phrases used by the interview participants, and this was explained to them in the information sheet and restated at the start of the interview. The research topic is on domestic abuse against men in Nigeria and it therefore requires some sensitivity. Whilst participants are professional practitioners and/or key stakeholders working in the area of domestic abuse, there is always a possibility that some may have had direct experience of domestic abuse. Participants were informed of the nature of the research and the question themes to be pursued beforehand and informed that they can decline to answer particular questions and that they may terminate the interview at any time. If there was any distress during the interview, the participants were given the option to stop whenever they felt uncomfortable. A list of relevant support services was also provided in the event participants needed further support.

Care was taken in phrasing interview questions, and the main areas of questions were already presented in the participation information sheet. Finally, I watched out for this possibility during the interviews.

During the course of the research, some challenges were anticipated, as follows:

- i. Because the research involves a sensitive topic, i.e., domestic abuse, there was a risk of distress to the participants. However, because the participants are professionals and experts in dealing with cases of domestic abuse, this risk was considered to be minimal. However, care was still taken in phrasing questions during the interviews and focus group discussions, and participants were informed of the nature of the research and the question themes to be pursued beforehand and informed that they can decline to answer particular questions and that they may terminate the interview at any time. If they encountered distress during the interview, the participants were given the

option to stop whenever they felt uncomfortable. Also, contact details for support services were provided in case of any triggers or distress.

- ii. Another potential problem was the risk of travelling outside Scotland to Nigeria and around the data collection points that were not familiar. However, all meetings and interviews were held either online, in public places, conference rooms or participant's offices for safety.

3.4. Analysis

The data was analysed using thematic analysis on the qualitative analysis software package NVivo. The thematic analysis combined both deductive and inductive approaches. Initial coding was informed by the study's research questions and existing literature on domestic abuse, masculinity, victimisation, help-seeking behaviour, and legal responses. However, the analysis remained open to new themes emerging directly from participants' accounts. NVivo was used to organise and manage the data, but the development of themes involved repeated reading of transcripts, comparison of codes, and refinement of emerging patterns. This approach ensured that the analysis captured both anticipated issues and unexpected insights arising from participants' experiences. NVivo helps organise and analyse nonnumeric or unstructured data and is useful for qualitative researchers.

The thematic analysis technique by Braun and Clarke (2021) was used for the analysis and interpretation of this data. Thematic analysis is a qualitative method, and it is adopted to identify, analyse and report patterns in a data, it seeks to identify recurring patterns in the data (Braun and Clarke, 2021). It was used to explore the gap in the Nigerian society's responses to male victims of domestic abuse by deriving themes from the responses of the research participants which gave insights on their understanding of services available to male victims of domestic abuse. Thematic analysis is important because it helps identify important factors from large and diverse data, it helps narrow down and bring together similar ideas that might not have been noticed if viewed separately (Leininger, 1998 and Aslam and Rana, 2022). Thematic analysis is appropriate for this research because this research involves understanding the perspectives of the Nigerian society on domestic abuse against men in Nigeria, thematic analysis allows this research to capture in detail the nuances and the diverse perspectives of the participants views on domestic abuse against men in Nigeria.

The thematic analysis adopted six stages of analysis as explained by Braun and Clarke; familiarization with the data, formulating the codes, generating themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes and reporting them (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

3.5. Themes from the data

The five main themes and their sub-themes identified from the data will be discussed and analysed in the coming three chapters. These identified themes reflected key stakeholders' views. The themes were derived from the quotes by the stakeholders and the codes developed while analysing the data. The table below outlines the themes and subthemes identified in the data;

TABLE 2: TABLE OF THEMES

Individualistic understandings of domestic abuse against men	1. Diverse understandings of domestic abuse 2. Forms of domestic abuse 3. Impacts 3.1. Impacts on adults 3.2. Impacts on children 4. Recognition and knowledge of domestic abuse against men 5. Knowledge of domestic abuse involving women
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Individualistic explanations for domestic abuse perpetrated by women against men	1. Past experiences of abuse 1.1. Childhood experience of domestic abuse 2. Reasons for male domestic abuse 2.1. Power struggle 2.2. Socio-economic conditions 2.3. Infidelity 2.4. Societal Expectations 2.4.1. Challenges to Masculinity
Understanding service responses	1. Training issues 2. Awareness 3. Lack of representation 4. Lack of a gendered approach 5. Responses 6. Lack of services and resources for men 7. Intervention 8. Improvements
Perceptions on help seeking	1. Help seeking behaviour 2. Reluctance and barriers to help seeking 3. Societal perceptions 4. Religious suppression
Legal service challenges	1. Adequacy of the existing laws

	2. Application and interpretation of the law
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3.6. A brief reflection on my fieldwork

A reflective piece is important because it helps one learn from their experiences. As stated by Gibbs (1988: 13), ‘it is not sufficient to have an experience in order to learn. Without reflecting on this experience, it may quickly be forgotten, or its learning potential lost’. Reflecting on my work helps to put one’s work in perspective for better understanding and encourages self-directed learning.

This reflective piece is on my fieldwork that took place from the 26th of September 2022 till the 31st of October 2022. It involved me travelling to Nigeria for interviews and focus group discussions with professionals and key stakeholders that deal with domestic abuse in Nigeria. The purpose of the research is to develop an understanding of responses to male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria.

I was able to conduct all my focus group discussions with local chiefs and community stakeholders in Nigeria. It consisted of two groups involving five people each. I was able to interview two law enforcement officers, four advocacy group workers and a mediator before leaving Nigeria after five weeks and also got to interview four judicial officers online, in January 2024 after returning to the United Kingdom.

The interview and focus group discussion were a good experience for me, and it was very helpful to get other people’s perspectives, and I believe the research method adopted helped to get an understanding of people’s perspectives. I was able to answer my research question using the methods implemented. The rejections also gave me answers as it highlighted the response to domestic abuse when it involved men. Several of the advocacy groups contacted to participate immediately rejected partaking in the research when I divulged my research focused on male victims of domestic abuse, with most of the rejection being because they did not have the capacity or interest to work with male victims. The major bad experience was when a participant that had agreed to take part in an interview and did not show up or cancel, and I had to wait for hours before I finally realised the person was a no show and when I tried to

follow up, I was ignored. I also got a lot of unresponsive requests but that is to be expected for any research work involving human participants.

Another experience I had was finding a flier for a men's help centre that provided services for male victims of any kind of abuse. I found their information online that provided an email address, phone number, an address and a twitter handle. However, it ended up being a dead end, as the address was vacant, the number switched off, all emails bounced back, and the twitter account had been inactive from February 2021. The reporter that had previously written about the help centre was also contacted but he was unable to provide any further any further information about the centre or why they had closed down the organisation.

3.7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter highlighted the research methodology adopted in this thesis. The research adopted a qualitative research method. The data collection was implemented using a set of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders and experts that handle domestic abuse in Nigeria. The data was analysed using thematic analysis on the qualitative analysis software package NVivo. Qualitative analysis is conducted to explore and understand other people's beliefs and experiences making it the most adequate method for this research because this thesis' main focus is finding peoples perspectives on domestic abuse against men.

Focus group discussions and interviews methods are most appropriate to determine people's perceptions and values which ensured deep insight into the understanding of the stakeholders. The methodology used has been effective and I have been able to get robust and useful information for the furtherance of this research, some limitations were identified such as, recruitment especially because the research involved male victims sample size restrictions and time limitations. I believe future similar research should appoint more time to conduct fieldwork in Nigeria.

It is intended that this research will be of interest to academics, advocacy groups, legal practitioners, health workers, social workers, media outlets, public agencies or government institutions.

The next chapter of this thesis will consider the legal framework that governs domestic abuse in Nigeria, the roles and the problems with how these laws are implemented by the law

enforcement and will focus on analysing and interpreting some of the data collected using the methods explained above.

CHAPTER FOUR: LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK ON DOMESTIC ABUSE IN NIGERIA

This chapter is divided into two main sections, the legislative framework on domestic abuse in Nigeria and the research findings which explore key stakeholders' views on the adequacy of the available legislative framework on domestic abuse in Nigeria. These sections will discuss the available laws protecting against domestic abuse in Nigeria and how the society (the key stakeholders) approaches it, highlighting its availability, accessibility, implementation, strength and challenges. It will also investigate its applicability to male victims of domestic abuse.

4.0. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

4.0.1. Introduction

Domestic abuse can be considered an ambiguous term in Nigeria; there are different understandings of both the scope of the term, and what kinds of behaviours are subsumed within it. Whereas some Nigerian states have legislation in place that criminalises domestic abuse; others do not. Yet even within those states which do have legislation in place, the definitions of what constitutes domestic abuse differs.

In order to contextualise the current legislative framework relating to domestic abuse in Nigeria, this short chapter will commence with an overview of the role of international law in Nigeria and will go on to examine the various laws addressing domestic abuse that have been introduced in Nigeria and specifically consider some problems with their implementation.

Whilst domestic abuse is criminalised in many developed countries, in the Northern part of Nigeria wife beating (as it is known) remains both culturally and legally acceptable according to Section 55(1)(d) of the Nigeria Penal Code Act 1960⁴. Across Nigeria, patriarchy and forms of hegemonic masculinity are prevalent affecting both men and women, influencing the legal and social response to domestic abuse (Fader, 2021). This is seen in the ever-present debate on women's roles in the society, how men exert their authority against their wives and also in the way hegemonic masculinity has made men unable to speak when abused (Fader, 2021, *Worldwide History of Domestic Violence - Criminal Justice*, 2022).

⁴ "Nothing is an offence which is done by a husband for the purpose of correcting his wife, such husband and wife being subject to any native law or custom in which correction is recognised as lawful, and provided that it does not amount to grievous hurt" – Section 55(1)(d) Nigerian Penal Code Act 1960. (This law is still applicable in the Northern states of Nigeria to date).

4.1. The role of international law in Nigeria and how the court interprets international law

International laws and treaties are only applicable in Nigeria if they are enacted into law by the National Assembly and this is provided under Section 12(1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 2021, which states that ‘no treaties shall have force of law in Nigeria unless it has been enacted into a law by the National Assembly’. The Supreme Court of Nigeria in the case of *Abacha v Fawehinmi*⁵ also states that ‘before the enactment of international laws or treaties into domestic law by the National Assembly, an international treaty has no such force of law as to make its provisions justiciable in our courts’ (Supreme Court of Nigeria, 2000). International laws therefore do not have binding power in Nigeria and require the permission of national law before they can confer rights and obligations within Nigeria (Okebukola, 2020). This means Nigeria determines the extent to which international law is incorporated in its legal system (Bradley, 1999). This signifies that provisions from international law can be set aside when it is not considered beneficial to the country and that decisions by the Court established by international law are merely recommendations unless domesticated. The African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, though an international law was ratified and has been domesticated in Nigeria, making all the provisions of this law binding in Nigeria (Okeke, 1997; Okebukola, 2020) and requiring an international obligation, although this does not give the domesticated international law superiority over the Constitution (Okebukola, 2020).

In spite of this, Nigerian scholars are divided on the approach to adopting international law in to the Nigerian legal system, one group of scholars holding that Nigeria should endorse the doctrine of incorporation believing that Nigeria being a developing country, cannot afford to lower their domestic laws to accommodate international laws as superior and other scholars believing the doctrine of transformation should be practiced instead and that international laws should be dominant over domestic laws. This is because international laws include domestic laws in their application and are more advantageous because of their global and international nature (Ojigbo, 2009; Okeke, 1997). These two doctrines have advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of the incorporation doctrine would enable laws would still be more in tune with the culture, traditions and customs of Nigeria that cannot be understood by international laws because of how broad they are unlike domestic laws that is more specific

⁵ General Sanni Abacha and others v Chief Gani Fawehinmi G (2000) 6 NWLR (pt 60) 228 (SC).

to its society. This does not take away from the disadvantages of the incorporation doctrine as the Nigerian law is recognized for its narrowness and the limitations of human rights (Okeke, 2017).

As will be discussed below, many international laws have provisions to protect against domestic abuse, but Nigeria has no Federal Law explicitly criminalising domestic abuse that is applicable across the federation (Nwazuke, 2016).

The Nigerian Constitution does not specifically protect against domestic abuse, instead protection can be obtained from general fundamental rights provisions contained in Chapter IV of the Constitution (Ojilere et al., 2019). These laws will be further examined below. In cases like this, if Nigeria practiced the transformation doctrine, international laws on protection against domestic abuse would have been automatically enforceable. This also applies to the freedom from discrimination for LGBTQ+ persons which is recognised internationally but as homosexuality is heavily criminalised in Nigeria and discrimination against LGBT persons is not considered a violation of their human right to be free from discrimination as there is no law protecting against discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity in any Nigerian law (LawPádí, n.d.). As will be discussed this has significant implications for men experiencing domestic abuse within the context a homosexual relationship.

Nigeria has accepted the rules of international law but on its own terms, meaning the most effective way to implement an international law is when the National Assembly domesticates the international law, then the international law is in force, enforceable and justiciable in any competent Court of law in Nigeria (Okeke, 2017).

However, judges in the Court of law sometimes still consider provisions of international treaties that have not been incorporated especially those relating to human rights when applying municipal law (Okeke, 2017). It has been argued that Judges should therefore not be shy when implementing the law, to adequately curb domestic abuse, domesticated laws and international laws can be linked to adequately ensure justice (Enemo, 2018).

4.2. Applicable laws on domestic abuse in international law

International and regional legal frameworks lay down obligations for State parties to follow. Provisions to protect against domestic abuse are enshrined in several international laws

however not all of them have been signed and ratified in Nigeria. These international instruments are as follows:

- i. **African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) and the Additional Protocol:** This is an international human rights instrument that is intended to promote and protect human rights and basic freedoms. It is a legally binding treaty and provides the normative framework for an African human rights framework. It has been ratified and domesticated into law in Nigeria and is therefore enforceable in any Court of Law in Nigeria (Arowolo, 2020). It acts as a major framework for the protection of fundamental human rights in Nigeria, and the protection against domestic violence can be pulled out under the right to dignity provided in this Act (Ngozi et al; 2017).
- ii. **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW):** The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women is an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. It is seen as a landmark Convention in the promotion and the protection of the rights of women. CEDAW was ratified in Nigeria in 1986, but is yet to be domesticated in Nigeria, more than 35 years after its ratification. This is due to many inter-related factors including lack of political will, politics, and perceived conflicts between the spirit and letter of CEDAW and national and local cultural and religious factors. It has been argued that Nigeria is a deeply patriarchal nation, and hence many men are not ready let go of the control over women if this Convention is domesticated (Arowolo, 2020; Anyogu and Okpalaobi, 2017). At the time of its introduction, CEDAW contained no express reference to the issue of violence against women. However, the approach adopted by the CEDAW Committee has been to interpret CEDAW in such a way as to encompass this issue, as exemplified by the Committee's General Recommendation No 19 on violence against women in 1992 wherein the definition of discrimination includes gender-based violence, that is, violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty. Gender-based violence may breach specific provisions of the Convention, regardless of whether those provisions expressly mention violence (CEDAW (1992) General Recommendation on Violence against Women No. 19).

- iii. **United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW)**, 1993: The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women was issued by the UN General Assembly in 1993. It was the first international instrument to explicitly address violence against women and provided a framework for national and international action. DEVAW defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. It is a non-legally binding instrument but through its call on governments to condemn such violence and to refrain from using customs, traditions or religious beliefs to avoid their obligations to end it, the Declaration made an important contribution to recognising violence against women as an international human rights violation. It is important to note that this instrument does not recognise men as victims of domestic violence and neither does it recognise women as perpetrators of domestic violence (Ojilere et al., 2019). This instrument has been ratified in Nigeria and protects women from violence perpetuated by men (Arowolo, 2020).

4.3. Applicable laws on Domestic Abuse in Nigeria

As previously stated, there are no laws in Nigeria that deal specifically with domestic violence or abuse that are applicable throughout the Federation. The VAPP Act does protect against domestic abuse, but it is only applicable in the Federal Capital Territory and cannot be enforced in other states unless the state adopts it (Enemo, 2018). This Act will be further discussed below, along with some of the domestic laws on domestic abuse applicable in Nigeria;

1. **Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria:** The grundnorm or ground norm⁶ which is the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 does not specifically provide for Domestic Abuse but in Chapter IV, under the fundamental human rights section, some rights can be activated to protect against some forms of domestic violence (Ojilere et al., 2019). These sections include the following:
 - a. Prohibition against discrimination in Section 42(1).

⁶ Ground norm is the foundation which all other laws in derive their authority (Mann, 2010). The 1999 constitution is the ground norm, meaning if any other law in Nigeria conflicts with the constitution the Constitution prevails.

- b. Right to life in Section 31.
 - c. Right to dignity in Section 34.
 - d. Prohibition against torture in section 34(1).
2. **The Nigeria Criminal Code and Penal Code:** These codes include provisions which criminalise different forms of violence amongst other offences, examples include; battery, assault and murder (Ibraheem, 2017). The Criminal Code is applicable in the southern part of Nigeria while the Nigeria Penal Code Act 1960 is applicable in the northern part of Nigeria but they both do not have provisions specifically providing for protection against domestic violence. The Penal Code actually has provisions that contributes to violence as it permits the use of force by a husband to correct his wife (Ngozi et al; 2017).
 3. **Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP):** In 2015, Nigeria enacted the VAPP Act, which applies to various forms of domestic violence/abuse in the public and private place. Some see this as an attempt to overcome Nigeria's distinctive cultural practices which condone wife-beating (Okonkwo-Ogabu and Ifenacho, 2018). This Act is known for three things; firstly, for being the first federal law specifically protecting against domestic violence in Nigeria, secondly, for being the first law that recognises male victims of rape in Nigeria (Okunola, 2021) and thirdly for its gender-neutral language. The purpose of this Act is 'to prohibit all forms of violence against persons in private and public life and to provide maximum protection and effective remedies for victims and to punish offenders' (Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act). This Act is an improvement on the available laws namely; Nigeria Penal Code Act 1960 and the Nigerian Criminal Code 1990 and this is because this law is specific to violence providing compensation and protection to victims of various forms of violence and not just mentioning violence amongst other crimes as the previous laws (LawPavilion, 2016).

A notable feature is that when provisions of this Act are in conflict with any other provision with similar offences as in the Criminal or Penal code, the provisions of the VAPP Act will supersede (Ibraheem, 2017). However, the problem is that the Act can only be implemented in the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory limiting its application.

The VAPP provides for various forms of violence, however section 46 of the VAPP defines domestic violence as “any act perpetrated on any person in a domestic relationship where such act causes harm or may cause imminent harm to the safety, health or wellbeing of any person” (Section 46 of the VAPP Act). The provision of this encompasses various forms of domestic abuse. Definitions are provided under section 46 of the act as follows:

- a. Emotional, verbal or psychological domestic abuse as a pattern of degrading or humiliating conduct towards any person including; repeated insults, ridicule, repeated threats, possessiveness that constitutes an invasion of a person’s privacy, liberty, integrity or security.
- b. Physical domestic abuse as acts or threatened acts of physical aggression towards any person such as slapping, hitting, kicking and beating.
- c. Sexual domestic abuse as any conduct which violates, humiliates or degrades the sexual integrity of any person.
- d. Economic and financial domestic abuse as forced financial dependence, denial of inheritance, unreasonable deprivation of financial resources a person is entitled to or requires out of necessity. (Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act 2015, Obi, 2020; Ibraheem, 2017).

It is necessary to understand what domestic relationship means in the context defined above and fortunately the VAPP in section 46 also provides the definition as a relationship between any person and a perpetrator of violence that are married, living or have lived together, parents of a child, family members, engaged or dating and sharing residence.

In regard to domestic violence, the Act provides for the protection of the following:

- i. Abandonment of children, spouse and other dependants without means of sustenance (Section 16 the VAAP Act).
- ii. Forceful ejection of the partner from home (Section 9 of the VAPP Act).
- iii. Battery against the spouse (Section 19 of the VAPP Act; LawPavilion, 2016).
- iv. Forced financial dependence or economic abuse (Section 12 of the VAPP Act).

- v. Forced isolation or separation from family and friends (Section 13 of the VAPP Act).
- vi. Stalking (Section 17 VAPP the Act).
- vii. Harmful traditional practices (Section 20 VAPP Act).
- viii. Attack with harmful substances (Section 21 VAPP Act).

In section 32 of the VAPP Act, provisions are also made for the power of the police when confronted with an incidence of violence, authorises the issuance of protection orders and also mandated in Section 42, the submission of an annual report on domestic violence to the Federal Government and a copy to the National Bureau for Statistics. However, upon review of the Statistical Report on Women and Men in Nigeria 2018 and 2020 by the National Bureau for Statistics, the report provided on domestic violence only addresses violence against women.

It took 14 years for the VAPP Act to be passed into law in 2015. Advocacy for the establishment of this law started as a result of the high rate of violence in Nigeria and began at a legislative advocacy workshop on the violence against women in 2001 by the Legislative Advocacy Coalition on Violence against Women (LACVAW), a civil rights group (Ibraheem, 2017).

The progress of this Act is interesting. The Bill was first presented before the House of Representatives in 2002 as the Bill on ‘Violence against Women’ but after eight other bills on gender-based violence were added to it, it was changed to the Bill on the ‘Violence against Persons’ in 2008 (Obi, 2020; Ibraheem, 2017). This shows that the initial focus of the law was the protection of women against violence but became what it is right now after the combination of various bills that dealt with gender-based violence.

The VAPP Act although a federal law, is only applicable in the Federal Capital Territory and the states that have adopted this act into law (Enemo, 2018; Nwazuoke, 2016). Sixteen out of the thirty-six states in Nigeria have already passed the VAPP Act into law with the latest one being in December 2021. These states are namely; Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Benue, Delta, Ebonyi, Edo, Enugu, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kwara, Nasarawa, Ogun, Ondo and Oyo state (Ogundepo, 2021; VAPP TRACKER - Partners West Africa Nigeria, 2022; Okunola, 2021). As of June 2025, the VAPP tracker concedes that 33 out of the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory have domesticated the VAPP Act.

Lagos State and Ekiti state are not included in the states that have passed the VAPP Act into law, because these two states already had laws to protect against domestic violence long before the VAPP was enacted. The Protection against Domestic Violence Law, 2007 in Lagos and the Gender-Based Violence Prohibition Law, 2011 for Ekiti State. These laws actually served as a guide or reference point in establishing the VAPP Act (Okunola, 2021). It should be noted that while Ekiti State was the first state in Nigeria to enact a law purposely protecting against gender-based violence in Nigeria, since the enactment of the VAPP Act 2015 by the Senate and the House of Representatives in 2015, Ekiti State decided to revise their earlier law to incorporate provisions from the VAPP Act making the new revised law, the Ekiti State Gender-Based Violence (Prohibition) Law, 2019 (Ekiti State Government website on the Ekiti State Gender-Based Violence (Prohibition) Law, 2019).

The reason the remaining states have not passed the VAPP into law and also why it took this long for other states to implement this law is because of Nigeria's long reliance on tradition, culture and religion and unfortunately domestic abuse is entrenched in several of the cultures and traditions practiced in Nigeria. Many also believe the VAPP Act has come to destroy their culture and tradition (Ogundepo, 2021; Okunola, 2021). Enforcing this Act is therefore challenging because of a general lack of awareness of its applicability in a context of cultural acceptance of domestic abuse. Those that are knowledgeable about it find it hard to enforce it because of the jurisdiction of the Act (Adeyemo and Bamidele, 2016). Additionally, the VAPP Act is a federal law, but majority of criminal law cases are handled by the state but section 27 of the VAPP Act provides that matters relating to domestic violence can only be filed at the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), this provision makes it difficult to implement except each state adopts the VAPP Act because only then can it be enforced and filed in each individual state as opposed to just the High Court of the FCT (Adeyemo and Bamidele, 2016; Okonkwo-Ogabu and Ifeanchio, 2018). While the intentions behind this Act were admirable, as there was no other legislative provision catering specifically for domestic violence in Nigeria, its usefulness has been somewhat circumvented. Isangha (2024) who examined the challenges faced by male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria through semi structures interviews with 35 male victims of domestic abuse raised concern on the Act's inadequate enforcement structure, stating that the Act lacked real depth.

To conclude, as of 2025 out of the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory, 32 states have domesticated and gazetted the VAPP Law, 4 of the states namely; Borno State, Jigawa State, Katsina State and Kogi State have adopted but have not gazetted the law and 1 state; Kano

State, the only state in Nigeria has failed to adopt the VAPP Act into law (Invictus Africa, 2025).

Invictus Africa 2025 report assessed the implementation and impact of the VAPP Act using a mixed methods approach which involved, interviews with key government officials and a quantitative survey of over 11,000 Nigerians across different backgrounds and all the states that had domesticated the VAPP Law and the Federal Capital Territory. The report found that even after 10 years of enactment, only 49.3% of Nigerians are aware of the existence of the VAPP Act with only 29% having a good understanding of the contents.

4.3.1. Legal framework in Lagos State

The data collection for this thesis took place in Lagos State Nigeria, and therefore it is essential to devote a subsection to the protective laws on domestic abuse in Lagos State. These state laws include;

- a. The Lagos State Protection Against Domestic Violence Law, (PADVL) 2007: The PADVL is one of the first laws that addresses domestic abuse in Nigeria

Section 18(g)⁷ of the PADVL gives definitions and examples on what can be described as domestic violence (Lagos State Protection Against Domestic Violence Law, 2007). It is praised for the first of its kind to provide protection orders and convict perpetrators of domestic abuse in Nigeria.

According to Gbenga-Ogundare (2023), there has been a lot of pressure on the state government to review the PADVL, he claimed that this was initiated by a women's rights activist known as the Women Advocates Research and Documentation centre (WARDC) that identified several gaps. They believed important provisions that would ensure adequate efficiency of the law. He also reported that according to a senior lecturer at the University of Lagos, the PADVL has no provisions on sanctions for domestic abuse, on female circumcision

⁷ Domestic violence means any of these acts; 'physical abuse; sexual abuse and exploitation including but not limited to rape, incest, and sexual assault; starvation; emotional, verbal, and psychological abuse; economic abuse and exploitation; denial of basic education; intimidation; harassment; stalking; hazardous attack including acid both with offensive or poisonous substance; property damage; entry into the complainant's residence' – Section 18(g) PADVL.

and that it focused solely on issuing protective orders to victims (Gbenga-Ogundare, 2023).

However, according to Dipo-Salami (2021) in a report commissioned by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (2021), it was asserted that Lagos State government is not in any rush to review the PADVL or domesticate the VAPP Act, although Pulse news (2021) reports that the state government is considering a review of the PADVL to identify and integrate the provisions from the VAPP that are not reflected in the PADVL. Though as of 2025 Lagos State has not started the amendment of the PADVL.

Some of the criticisms of the PADVL is that while it identifies economic abuse, it does not include provisions on denial of inheritance or succession rights (Onyemelukwe, 2016). Justice Sherifat Solebo said in Pulse news (2021) that the PADVL focused mainly on protecting the right of domestic abuse victims and does not criminalise the domestic abuse like the VAPP does. In the same news outlet, Chief Magistrate Kikelomo Ayeye agrees that there needs to be a further diverse set of orders for the protection of victims' besides from protection orders, with which she recommended an intervention order (Pulse news, 2021).

- b. The Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency Law: This law was passed into law by Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu on September 20, 2021, as a result of the growing reports of domestic abuse in Lagos State. This law was established to fix the limitations of the Lagos State PADVL and to streamline Lagos State's response to domestic and sexual violence. This law established the sex offenders register and the Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA), a team charged with responding to all forms of domestic abuse in Lagos State (Akpede, 2022).

According to the Lagos State ministry of Justice this law mandates the DSVA to provide immediate response to victims of gender-based violence, provide medical care, conduct investigations, establish shelters, regulate private shelters, provide financial assistance to high-risk victims, ensure education and organise advocacy activities for

members of the community. Akpede (2022) suggests that the aim of the law is to protect victims from all forms of sexual gender-based violence and discrimination while ensuring access to wellbeing services.

The major difference between the PADVL and the DSVAL is that the DSVAL concentrates on providing quality services to all victims of domestic abuse in Lagos State through the DSVL (Lagos State Ministry of Justice, 2025), while the PADVL focuses more on protective and conviction orders for victims of domestic violence in Lagos State. The PADVL gives victims the process and right to seek protection while also directing the courts on how to provide said protection.

As with all the laws protecting against domestic abuse in Nigeria, the PADVL and DSVAL are phrased in a gender-neutral way, making the provisions accessible to male victims of domestic abuse⁸.

4.3.2. Coercive Control and the law

As discussed in chapter two of this thesis, coercive control has become an increasingly recognised dimension of domestic abuse, and it has been criminalised in some jurisdictions. Coercive control indicates a person that may not be physically abused but is subject to a pattern of power and control where a victim is constantly threatened, belittled, stalked, alienated etc (Stark 2007). Coercive Control in the strict sense is not recognised in Nigeria, however the theory behind coercive control can be briefly seen in the VAPP Act as certain elements of coercive control are recognised as domestic abuse (Candela, 2016).

Section 12, 13 and 17 of the VAPP Act provide protection for some elements of coercive control like forced financial dependence and economic abuse, forced isolation or separation from family and friends and stalking.

4.4. Problems with the laws on Domestic abuse in Nigeria

The VAPP act, though a good initiative by the government has ambiguities that make accessing and implementing this law problematic. These problems will be assessed below:

⁸ Section 2(1) of the PADVL says ‘any complainant of domestic violence may apply to the court’.

1. **Jurisdiction:** Section 27 of the VAPP Act states that ‘only the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja empowered by an Act of Parliament has the jurisdiction to hear and grant any application under the Act’. This provision limits the applicability of this act, making it impossible for other Courts to exercise jurisdiction. A remedy to this issue on jurisdiction is for there to be an amendment to the Act extending jurisdiction to the Federal High Court. The Federal High Court has a section in each of the thirty-six states in the country; hence this makes enforcing and assessing the provisions of this Act in every state in Nigeria much easier (Nwazuo, 2016).
2. **Funding:** The Act makes no provision for a source of funding to implement the Act. What this means, is that there is no clear source of funding for rehabilitation, compensation and treatment. There are cases where the perpetrator cannot afford compensation, and the Act makes no provision for the compensation fund (Ibraheem, 2017). A solution to this matter is for there to be a specific and clear source of funding in the Act. It is to be said that 15 states have established a victim’s support fund, and 7 other states are working on establishing one but none of the states have a sustainable source of fund, with these all these states relying solely on state budgets (Invictus Africa, 2025).
3. **Regulatory Body:** According to Section 44 of the VAPP Act, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in persons and Other related Matters (NAPTIP) is mandated to administer the provisions of the Act. However, it is uncertain whether NAPTIP can handle matters in the VAPP in addition to its primary responsibility provided in the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in persons and Other related Matters Act (Ibraheem, 2017). Instead, there should be a different body created to primary deal with cases of violence under the VAPP to ensure the utmost attention is placed on these issues.
4. **Implementation:** There is a lack of coordination when it comes to implementing and applying protection orders across states, the scope of protection orders does not apply outside the issuing states. The scope of protection orders should expand across the Country. Also, when a law is passed at the Federal level, it is expected that State government domesticate the Act into laws to fit their peculiar needs, however according to the Invictus Africa 2025 report, many of the states that have passed this

Act into laws have weakened its importance by removing and altering key provisions which has undermined the intention of the Law an example is changing the definition of rape as provided by the VAPP Act.

In conclusion, Provisions to protect against domestic abuse is enshrined in several international laws however not all of them have been signed and ratified in Nigeria by the National Assembly. Three international instruments that protect against domestic abuse were considered in this chapter.

While there are no national laws criminalising domestic abuse that are applicable throughout the Federation in Nigeria, the VAPP Act was established to protect Nigerians against all kinds of violence in the public and private place. With the introduction of the VAPP Act, abuse occurring in the privacy of the home theoretically be punished. As of 2025, most states have adopted the VAPP Act, it has now been domesticated by 33 of the 36 states in Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory where it was passed, two of the remaining three states already had their specific laws to protect against gender-based violence even before the enactment of the VAPP Act, 2015.

Theoretically, the VAPP Act is gender-neutral in that it applies to both men and women and as such should recognise domestic abuse perpetrated against men. However, laws only work when implemented and while the attitude of the law towards domestic abuse has improved over time, there is still quite a lot of work to be done to ensure domestic abuse victims (both male and female) are properly protected in Nigeria.

4.5. Key stakeholders' insights on the adequacy of current legislation on domestic abuse against men in Nigeria

4.5.1. Introduction

This section engages with the research findings which explore stakeholder's insights into the accessibility, application and challenges of the current policy and legislative landscape in relation to domestic abuse against men in Nigeria. Specifically, this chapter will address research question four, which is; How adequate are the current legislation and policies on addressing domestic abuse against men in Nigeria? The main theme revealed from the interviews and focus group discussions centred on legal service challenges with subthemes on the application and interpretation of the law and its adequacy for responding to domestic

abuse. These themes are discussed in turn below, drawing upon interview and focus group data to highlight pertinent issues.

As discussed above, relevant international laws, conventions and declarations include: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); The African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) and the Additional Protocol; The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW), 1993. While the domestic laws are: The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP); the Criminal Code and Nigeria Penal Code Act 1960. Of the domestic laws, only the VAPP Act explicitly protects against domestic abuse/violence, while other laws protect against other kinds of violence, abuse and torture, and do not specifically mention domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse is a violation of a person's human right, and this is recognised by numerous laws, policies and treaties internationally and domestically in Nigeria. Domestic abuse though not expressly mentioned in most international laws can be protected with certain human rights like the right to liberty, right to security of person, right to life, right to freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment. The same thing applies to local laws in Nigeria as only the VAPP Act directly mentions and protects against domestic abuse in Nigeria. However, domestic abuse victims can still be protected under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria through the fundamental human rights provisions, every person according to Chapter IV of the Constitution has a right to life, right to dignity, right to personal liberty, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of movement and the right to acquire and own property anywhere in Nigeria (Chapter IV, Sections 33- 43 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria). The combination of these provisions indirectly provides protection from domestic abuse (Ibitoye, 2018).

4.6. LEGAL SERVICE CHALLENGES

This theme 'legal service challenges' was developed from stakeholders' views on what they considered as major challenges with the current legislations and policies addressing domestic abuse against men in Nigeria.

4.6.1. Adequacy of the existing laws

This section discusses the participants' views on the adequacy and capabilities of the available laws in dealing with male victims and also if the law is applicable to male victims of domestic abuse. As stated in Chapter 3, the primary law that deals with domestic abuse in Nigeria is The Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP) 2015. This Act was the first Act introduced in Nigeria to address domestic abuse. The initial intention of the law makers of the VAPP Act was focused on the protection of women against violence but over the course of time it evolved from the initial aim from focusing just on women to be more gender neutral, changing the proposed bill titled Violence Against Women Bill to the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (Ibitoye, 2018).

This law came about to protect all forms of violence against all citizens of Nigeria in the private and public life while also providing remedies for victims and penalizing offenders (Ibitoye, 2018). It recognises different forms of violence and is gender neutral. In addition to recognising that men can be subject to domestic abuse, it also for the first time in Nigeria recognises men as victims of rape. The VAPP was welcome by legal scholars who argued that it is very important for the laws in any society to reflect the changing realities of societal needs (Okumagba and Ogisi, 2023). The VAPP Act is seen as an improvement on the Penal and Criminal Code in its recognition of different forms of violence not previously documented in the codes. It also provided not just punishments for the perpetrators but also compensation for victims of all forms of violence (Akpambang, 2020).

Omidoyin (2018) contends that while there are many advantages to the establishment of the VAPP Act, as discussed in Chapter 3, there remains a major challenge with its application and specifically is its lack of uniformity in its application across Nigeria.

A problem in the application of the VAPP Act is the lack of availability of a dedicated body to properly enforce the Act (Onyemelukwe, 2016). Section 44 of the Act provides the National Agency for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) as the body to oversee the enforcement of the Act, however, in practice there has been a lot of questions on their effectiveness because of all the other functions that the NAPTIP is saddled with, many have rallied for the implementation of a separate agency established solely for the regulation and enforcement of the Act (Ibitoye, 2018).

Interview questions about the law generated a mixture of responses from the participants. In response to questions about whether the laws available adequately covered both men and

women, some, particularly those from a law enforcement or judicial background agreed that the law was adequate in this regard due to its gender neutrality:

Yeah, I think the law is enough and it covers men and women enough (LE 2).

Yes, the law is gender neutral (LE 1).

You know the law is not gender biased (AG 4).

Judicial participants believed that the laws are gender neutral, and everybody has equal access to the laws and justice:

The way our laws are couched has made it in such a way that both men and women can have access to justice. (JD 5).

These participants went further to state that as long as due process is followed, the court would make decisions based on the evidence brought to court and that the laws are fixed, and it did not matter if the abuse was against a man or a woman:

there is no sentiment in law. Sufficient materials must be put in the affidavit in support of the complaint, and the court will make decisions based on facts and the law and not sentiment. (JD 2).

There is no special way. The domestic violence practice direction is what is followed. There is a motion supported by an affidavit brought by the complainant before the court. An interim protection order is then granted pending the hearing. (JD 2).

These views while correct in the legal and procedural sense, do not take cognisance of the nuances in domestic abuse especially against men. Using the example of the lack of acknowledgement of domestic abuse against men within Nigeria society and often by the men themselves has the result that men very rarely report. As such, cases never even reach the point of the law for it to be applied. The judicial participants seemed removed from actual cases and focused solely on evidence provided and due process. They did not seem concerned with the cultural and societal stigmatization that is associated with domestic abuse against men which may prevent men from engaging with the criminal justice system. One of the participants specifically mentioned that they did not notice the gender of the people that appeared before their court:

I don't notice if it is a man or woman that appears, I just focus on the evidence before me (JD 1).

While the statement made by the participant above might be considered to be in accordance with the gender-neutral tone of the VAPP Act, one can argue that treating men and women the same way does not result in equality of treatment. While formal legal equality suggests providing the same exact treatment to everybody, the problem with that is it does not recognise that people do not all start from the same place and adjustments must be made to recognise the imbalances. Treating people fairly means recognising that they have different starting points and will be affected by different issues in different ways.

On the other hand, there were some participants who believed that, whilst the VAPP Act is a step in the right direction in its provision of a framework for protecting against domestic abuse, it did not adequately protect men as victims. Different reasons were given by the participants for why legislation is not seen to benefit male victims, stating: poor visibility of law and policy to protect men; men not identifying (or reporting) that they have been abused and perception of a higher evidential threshold if they do report. In particular, community stakeholders and those from advocacy groups agreed that men and women did not benefit equally from the existing laws. For example:

Yes, it is a bit different, numbers will say the laws are not favourable towards men, the laws are in favour of women, if a man should come out and say that he is abused, you will want to really ask for some good evidence to back up, how are they supposed to get the evidence? many of them don't even want to believe they have been abused (AG 2).

This participant went on to state that in practice there is a higher evidential standard for male victims than for female victims and that at the stage when domestic abuse matters against men are brought to the attention of advocacy groups and law enforcements, there has to be very good evidence to back up their claim before the case will progress. However, this claim was disputed by the Judiciary.

AG 2 also believed that men often do not recognise that they are being abused and as such few cases are reported thereby hindering access to legal remedies. Lysova et al., (2020: 544) agreed with this claim where they stated that men's blindness to their abuse as a barrier to help seeking, they stated that the struggle for men to recognise themselves as possible victims of domestic abuse is due to 'a lack of gender inclusive knowledge on abuse'.

AG 2 went on to argue that there should be laws, policies and organisations specifically for men in the same way as there are for women:

most of the organisations deal with violence against women. We have a seat in the ministry that takes care of female rights and the girl child, I don't know of any law that specifically deals with abuse against men, but we have that well spelt out when it comes to the women. (CS 1).

Another community stakeholder participant believed that because of the inconsistency and rarity of domestic abuse against men, many policies or laws are not outrightly visible but hidden:

I know it is because we don't have all those policies out there that protects the men, I am sure if we dig, we might find some but even the government structure does not have anything to protect the men (CS 1).

It should be noted that the participants used the terms 'policies' and 'laws' interchangeably. Lawrence (2003) reports that the laws, policies, support services and shelters available for female victims of domestic abuse are not available to male victims in Nigeria, unlike in other countries like the United Kingdom and the United States of America, where there has been recent acknowledgement and provision of support services for male victims. There is still a long way to go in Nigeria in acknowledging men as possible victims of domestic abuse, as well as in the implementation of laws and policies that recognise and protect male victims of domestic abuse.

4.6.2. Application and interpretation of the Law

This section will look at how the participants apply and interpret the available laws governing domestic abuse against men in Nigeria and in particular whether they consider it to be implemented the same way for men and women in Nigeria.

Not all participants answered this question, only the five members of the judiciary had opinions on the application and interpretation of the law. As stated in the section above, many of the participants and most of the judicial participants believed the laws to be gender neutral with equal access for everyone.

Just one judicial participant critiqued the application of the available laws. He stated that the laws did not provide clear remedies for domestic abuse victims, and he also questioned the

process of proving evidence was strict for domestic abuse, he pointed out that sometimes cases could not be proved beyond reasonable doubt. With how sensitive domestic abuse is, it is not every time evidence could be given without reasonable doubt, the participant advised accepting evidence if it can be clearly proven:

Also, clear criminal sanctions ought to be prescribed for domestic abuses. These sorts of abuses could be quasi criminal and having strict liability once clear proof is seen as opposed to one to be proved beyond reasonable doubt. There should also be clear remedies for false prosecution for domestic abuse. (JD 4).

False prosecution of domestic abuse is a serious offense punishable under section 125 of the criminal code; the Lagos State Domestic Violence Law also stipulates that false statements attract three years imprisonment. Unfortunately, there is not much in laws or literature on remuneration for false accusation or prosecution of domestic violence in Nigeria. However, when a person has been falsely accused or falsely prosecuted, the person can bring an action in tort seeking damages against their accuser, this was provided in the case of OGBONNA v. OGBONNA & ANOR (2014) LPELR-22308(CA). Because of how rare it is for men to report domestic abuse and the stigma in Nigeria; there is a low probability of men falsely prosecuting a woman for domestic abuse. However, Agunwa, 2021 suggests there is a higher probability for a woman to falsely prosecute a man of domestic abuse, and this could be to injure the other party, by using law enforcement to harass the other, to destroy the reputation of the other or for financial benefits. She further states that there have been many claims by some of the public in Nigeria that false prosecution of domestic abuse is a feminist agenda to witch hunt men. Like Agunwa, Silva (2021) and Henning et al., (2006) also posits that it is women who largely use or threaten to use false accusations of violence as a way of controlling their male partners nevertheless, there is no published data supporting this view.

Trocmé and Bala (2005) has suggested that false accusations is instead prevalent in divorce or custody battles, not strictly domestic abuse cases, and this tactic can be used by men and women alike.

JD 4 went further to state that there should be room to claim damages, and he stated that the current laws on domestic abuse only provided protection orders, this is provided under section Sections 28 and 30 of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act 2015. The only remuneration provided by the VAPP Act are protection orders to victims of domestic abuse in

the form of a legal document to restrain further abuse against a victim (Fasuyi and Olajide, 2023):

The actual redress available to victims should be clear under the domestic violence and go beyond giving protection orders. For example; there should be room to claim damages or to file a proper charge. (JD 4).

Some of these challenges are not specific to male victims, rather they speak to broader concerns about legislative provisions. Nonetheless, they are relevant to understanding legal and policy responses to domestic abuse against men and women in Nigeria.

4.7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the legislation in Nigeria does not specifically mention domestic abuse against men or women and the ones that mention domestic abuse, protection against domestic abuse is couched in a gender-neutral way to accommodate female and male victims. In the application and interpretation of the law, domestic abuse against men is not given specific consideration and all victims of domestic abuse are handled the same way, therefore neglecting the different experiences, nuances and distinctions of male and female victims of domestic abuse participants, especially from the judiciary who did not see a problem with this.

In this chapter, in regard to views about the adequacy of the law for dealing with domestic abuse perpetrated on men, participants from the same groups gave similar answers. So, the majority of the judiciary and law enforcement officers regarded the existing legal framework to be adequate for addressing domestic abuse where the victim is male. The advocacy groups and community stakeholders/ local chiefs however had a different view; some of the participants acknowledged the existence and adequacy of the current laws on domestic abuse in Nigeria, recognising its neutral tone which covered everybody, while others questioned the adequacy of the laws, stating that there should be laws and policies that specifically catered to male victims of domestic abuse as there were several for women.

The next two chapters will focus on analysing and interpreting some more data collected using the methods explained above.

CHAPTER FIVE: KEY STAKEHOLDERS' UNDERSTANDINGS AND EXPLANATIONS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE AGAINST MEN

5.0. Introduction

The analysis presented in this chapter is based on the interpretation of the qualitative data collected from key stakeholders on their views and understandings of domestic abuse against men in Nigeria. The key stakeholders included law enforcement officers, community stakeholders (local chiefs, personnel counsellors and local faith leaders in a religious health care centre), advocacy groups and members of the judiciary. There are five key themes which emerged from the data and these will be discussed over the course of the next three chapters. These key themes encapsulate the answers to my research questions, and they are; 1. Understandings of Domestic abuse against men; 2. Explanations for male domestic abuse; 3. Understanding services responses; 4. Perceptions on help seeking and; 4. Legal service challenges. The first two themes will be analysed in this chapter with the rest to be analysed in the subsequent chapters.

This chapter will address research question one and two, which are; one, how do key stakeholders/service responders understand and explain domestic abuse against men in Nigeria? And what are the social-cultural factors affecting the way key stakeholders/service responders' approach domestic abuse? This chapter has three sections: firstly, it provides brief information on the participants of the study, secondly, it introduces an in-depth analysis of themes generated from the interviews, and finally a summary of the findings is presented.

It is important to point out that the findings are based on stakeholders' views about heterosexual abused men. The stakeholders automatically assumed the research was about heterosexual men and had little conception of domestic abuse against homosexual men. This is possibly because of the criminalisation of homosexuality. Engaging in homosexual or same sex relationships is a crime in Nigeria punishable with up to 14 years imprisonment (Same Sex Prohibition Act, 2013). There is no legal protection for LGBTQ+ people in Nigeria, on the contrary their behaviour is criminalised. Many participants were drawn from the judiciary and law enforcement and as such are responsible for upholding the laws that punish many LGBTQ+ Nigerians. Therefore, it was difficult to explore with them their experiences of domestic abuse against men by men, as their perspectives remained focused on female perpetrated abuse.

The participants' job roles and organisation type were a determinant in their approach; thus, it is important to identify and differentiate between them presenting their views to reiterate what the participant's pseudonyms mean in relation to job roles. AG 1, AG 2, AG 3 and AG 4 are members from the advocacy group, JD 1, JD 2, JD 3, JD 4 and JD 5 are of the judiciary, LE 1 and LE 2 are police officers from law enforcement, the focus group CS 1 comprises religious/professional community stakeholders and CS 2 comprises local chiefs/community stakeholders. It can be inferred that the positions of the participants influenced and shaped the responses provided. Also, it is recognised that participants may not always have provided neutral accounts of their experiences. Participants may have been acting in ways influenced by my position as a researcher working on male victims of domestic abuse. For example, members of the judiciary and law enforcement tried to portray themselves as impartial and unbiased. Also, the participants may have focused on male victims of domestic abuse because of me. This is aligned with what Goffman (1959) explains as the 'presentation of self' where people present themselves in ways they think will be more acceptable by others, projecting a performed version of themselves. To neutralise this bias, I emphasised participant anonymity, encouraging them to speak their mind. Therefore, this thesis reflects not just the participant's perspectives but also the interactions and impressions they sought to portray.

Themes from Interviews and focus group discussions.

Two main themes and their sub-themes identified from the data will be discussed and analysed in this chapter. These identified themes reflected participant's understandings and explanations of domestic abuse against men while taking into account prevailing social-cultural factors in Nigeria. These themes and subthemes are discussed below;

5.1. UNDERSTANDINGS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE AGAINST MEN

This theme was developed from the participants' perspectives on what they considered to constitute domestic abuse and their understandings of it, including the reasons behind it, and its impact. In these discussions they drew their knowledge of, and relationships with victims of domestic abuse, the understanding of domestic abuse is very important for key stakeholders and service responders because it helps them recognise the various forms of domestic abuse, and the steps to protect, minimize and prevent the victims of domestic abuse. Understanding domestic abuse is also the first step in providing support for domestic abuse victims which is important to my thesis (Spruin et al., 2015). This theme addresses part of

research question one on ‘How key stakeholders/service responders understand domestic abuse against men in Nigeria?’.

Before moving forward with the subthemes, it is important to briefly describe the ways each stakeholder came into contact with abused men. Starting with advocacy groups, they typically connect with abused men through referrals, outreach and sensitization programs and through hotlines. Judicial officers usually come in contact with them when male victims appear in court for protective orders or criminal proceedings. Law enforcement officers usually come in contact with male victims through referrals and reports by either victims or concerned citizens. For local chiefs, they connects with victims when a domestic abuse case is brought before them by either the victims or by members of the community. Finally, for community stakeholders (counsellors and local faith leaders) they usually come in contact with male victims through referrals.

5.1.1. Diverse understandings of domestic abuse

Participants gave varied definitions of domestic abuse. Most gave gender neutral definitions of domestic abuse, considering domestic abuse to be committed and experienced by both men and women alike. This could be because they were already aware that the research centred on male victims of domestic abuse and they were trying to not make their definition female focused, this can be linked to the idea of acquiescence bias, where participants exhibit a form of participant bias driven by the desire to be seen favourably, to be polite or to confirm the researcher’s expectations (Holbrook, 2008).

However, it can also be argued that the participants gave gender neutral definitions due to the gender neutrality the Nigerian laws are drafted to be gender neutral in its protection against violence. Nevertheless, as will be highlighted further on in the analysis of the data, the participants gradually steered away from the gender-neutral definition they gave in the beginning, as the interviews and discussion went on, they did not always give gender-neutral views. Another observation was that the definitions provided by most participants were more personal opinions and layman’s definition than formal or legal definitions. Examples of such definitions provided by the participants are as follows:

I think it is an act unbecoming of a reasonable person, errrrh at home, or a domestic setting or a neighbourhood (JD 5).

JD 1 and CS 1 drew from the United Nations definition of domestic abuse as a ‘pattern of behaviour in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Abuse is physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person’ (United Nations, 2025). The definitions provided by the member of the Judiciary and the community stakeholder were:

A pattern of behaviour in any relationship used to control or maintain power over the other parties. It is also a pattern of abusive behaviour towards an intimate partner (JD 1).

Any unhealthy pattern of behaviour that exists in relationships can be seen as domestic abuse (CS 1).

As discussed in chapter 4, the VAPP Act, which is the law that governs domestic abuse in Nigeria defines domestic violence as any act “perpetrated on any person in a domestic relationship. Where such act causes harm or may cause imminent harm to the safety, health or wellbeing of any person.” The definition aligns with that provided by a member of the judiciary as:

Any form of mistreatment or cruelty towards persons in the home or domestic setting or towards persons under the control of the aggressor (JD 4).

It is worthy of note that although domestic abuse against men is the focus of this research, the participant viewed domestic abuse as any mistreatment in the domestic setting and not just within a domestic relationship, hence moving beyond intimate partners.

Other participants referred to different forms of domestic abuse in their definitions:

Domestic abuse is any kind of abuse, whether verbal, physical, economical umm harassment, just different types of abuse, it’s an encompassment of all types of abuse (AG 3).

I think it is any pattern of behaviour in a relationship that is unhealthy, it can be sexual, physical; emotional (CS 1).

There was a consensus amongst the participants that domestic abuse can happen to anybody, irrespective of gender:

Domestic abuse is not a respecter of gender either, it happens to everyone, it happens to women, it happens to men (AG 2).

Two participants from the judiciary, one police officer and one from the advocacy group concurred that domestic abuse occurs primarily within the confines of the home:

Domestic abuse in a layman's term is any violence that happens within the confines of the home. For an abuse to be considered domestic there must be a relationship, maybe father to daughter, husband to wife, wife to husband, girlfriend and boyfriend, any cohabiting relationship (AG 2).

Participants from the judiciary and law enforcement mentioned abuse against children as well, however, they were the only ones that stressed the inclusion of children when asked of their definition of domestic abuse. Whilst JD 3 did not specifically mention children he acknowledged that domestic abuse spans beyond just sexual partners in a family. Though it is important to note, that as the interviews and discussion proceeded, other participants besides from the judiciary and law enforcement later on recognised children as possible victims of domestic abuse. It is interesting to note that the participants that deal directly with the law immediately recognise other people besides from intimate partners as potential victims of domestic abuse. This could be because of their direct involvement with the laws, as the VAPP Act identifies domestic violence as any act within a domestic relationship and not just between intimate partners:

Any form of physical, verbal, emotional or sexual abuse of a child, family or any person in care of the defendant (JD 2).

It connotes the way a person acts violently towards another. To me, domestic abuse is all encapsulating and spans beyond just abuse between sexual partners (JD 3).

it can be on parents to children, husband to wife or wife to husband it is just physical abuse or wrongdoing, that is domestic abuse (LE 2).

As previously stated, the definitions provided are essential for comprehending how the participants understand domestic abuse. They did not just focus on women many of them specifically touched on abuse against men, women and children. This suggested that the participants are relatively well informed about the nature and characteristics of domestic abuse and did acknowledge men as possible victims of domestic abuse, highlighting in practice dealing with domestic is not really gender neutral.

While the definitions reflect some characteristics from the formal definition of domestic abuse as provided by the UN and the VAPP Act, these are also heavily influenced by the participants personal opinion of what is considered as domestic abuse. The definition provided by the UN explicitly referred to domestic abuse as occurring in intimate relationships, while the VAPP Act does not give one single definition of domestic abuse or violence, instead multiple sections criminalise various forms of domestic abuse, acknowledging its occurrence in private and domestic settings.

The UN definition also emphasized how abuse occurs between intimate partners when a partner tries to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Whilst this was not expressly mentioned by participants when asked for their definition of domestic abuse, as the interviews progressed, the issues of power and control in domestic abusive relationships emerged. This is further discussed below in section 3.1. on power dynamics in domestic abuse.

5.1.2. Forms of Domestic abuse

The forms of domestic abuse recognised by participants is crucial in ensuring the recognition of the various ways in which victims can be subjected to domestic abuse. Domestic abuse often manifests in a complex and interrelated manner, rarely presenting as an isolated incident, victims may simultaneously and cumulatively experience multiple forms of domestic abuse. As such it is important, that key stakeholders and service responders identify these diverse forms and extend appropriate assistance.

Participants gave the standard forms of domestic abuse as mentioned in the VAPP Act however some of the religious and professional community stakeholders provided forms of domestic abuse that were determined by their personal experiences:

I don't really know how to describe this but for example where the person that has the higher power in the relationship has a political inclination or orientation and wants the partner to forcefully conform to their own political orientation, I don't know where to place that, I guess you can call it political abuse? (CS 1).

Can I also add that, I don't know if it is added now but I have noticed that umm sooo when it comes to levels of intellect, ummm sometimes when one

person is more educated than the other partner; they can use it to abuse the other partner (CS 1).

Now I have been hearing of spiritual abuse, you might not be familiar with that form, but it is when a partner tries to force a partner to accept a religious belief that they do not believe in (CS 1).

As evidenced above, the forms of domestic abuse provided by the participants were based on the forms of domestic abuse they had heard about while working with victims of domestic abuse. That is, forms of domestic abuse like spiritual abuse and political abuse were thought of and mentioned in the moment during the interview although these forms are rarely mentioned in research literature. This is an interesting view into Nigeria's distinctive context on domestic abuse, the identification of religious abuse as a form of abuse in Nigeria is different from the forms identified in global north literatures. Because of how religious Nigeria is (Igwe (2015)), it is perhaps understandable that the participants will emphasize on spiritual abuse, although spiritual abuse can be put under other forms of domestic abuse, as it involves the misuse of power and authority within a religious or faith-based context, leading to emotional, psychological, or physical harm to the victim. It can take various forms, including coercive control, manipulation, isolation, shaming, and the distortion of religious teachings to justify abusive behaviour (Oakley and Kinmond, 2016).

As seen in chapter 2, Africa is deeply spiritual and religious. Most people in Nigeria identify as either a Christian or Muslim, with 56.1% of the total population being Muslim and 43.4% being Christian as of 2020 (Hackett, 2025). Spiritual abuse in this context is the use of religion to control, exploit, and manipulate people.

Tenkorang et al., (2026) posited that religion/spirituality can help people deal with abuse but it can also be weaponised and used to coerce and control intimate partners. They recognise that this type of abuse is rarely documented and identified two types of religious and spiritual domination predominant in Africa, namely, spiritual coercion and spiritual control. They believe that *spiritual coercion is when perpetrators use religion to intimidate or threaten their partners with the aim of controlling* (Ibid: 3; Tenkorang, 2025), and *spiritual control as when intimate partners use religious/spiritual beliefs to dominate with the aim of exploiting and eroding their partner's freedom* (ibid: 3). As stated by the participant above, Mulvihill et

al. (2023) found that perpetrators sometimes used religion to threaten and belittle their partners especially using biblical scriptures to control and manipulate them.

Participants from the advocacy group also gave further explanations when describing economical or financial abuse:

economical, I have actually gotten a client who her husband cut off all forms of financial support and said unless she comes back he won't pay anything for the children's upkeep, rents and so on, it's very sad (AG 1).

And economic abuse is when the partner is like, 'I know you are dependent on me for something and so because we have an issue, I will withdraw these things and this are things that are necessary for life like water, money, car keys and so on (AG 2).

Emphasis was placed on economic and financial abuse by several of the study participants when asked about the forms of domestic abuse, the stress placed on economic and financial abuse could be because of the considerable level of poverty in Nigeria. Indeed, other research has concluded that income is a major predictor of domestic abuse among couples in Nigeria (Okhakhume et al., 2016). This is opposed to the other more common forms of domestic abuse that were just stated without further explanations:

Well, I am aware of physical abuse, emotional abuse, verbal abuse, psychological abuse, basically (AG 2).

Verbal, physical, economical umm harassment (AG 3).

I did mention physical abuse in the forms of assaults, emotional abuse or exploitation, sexual abuse in the form of rape, deprivation, economic abuse, that is denial of financial resources, intimidation, etc. (JD 2).

Participants provided several examples of their interactions with victims of domestic abuse and sometimes, these examples cut across different forms of domestic abuse. A community stakeholder stated how effects of emotional abuse manifested as a physical illness, this will be better discussed below at the next section on the effects of domestic abuse:

I have an example of a case I treated in the clinic, where the man is infertile and cannot perform his manly duties to a woman. The man was subjected to emotional abuse for years until the man had high blood pressure and he came to the general hospital, and they kept on trying to treat him, but he was not getting better, so he was referred to my department and so we had to trace back and that is how we found out (CS 1).

The form of domestic abuse provided here relates to psychological or emotional abuse, however it is noted that the effect showed up as a physical illness.

I also handled a case where the husband supported the wife until she got her PhD, but after this she felt she was more learned than her husband and so she decided to start talking down to her husband, and errrh this involved verbal and emotional abuse and all he could do was just say sorry, agree to everything and he errr became very quiet and withdrawn. He finally reacted when he saw his wife with another man, he got infuriated and he hit her at that point. It became painful on the part of the man, you know? He took all the blame at the end because he was the one that hit her first. He had to apologize and pay a fine. He could no longer perform as a man at home because psychologically he was belittled to the point that he had to check himself with another woman to see if he was really weak not being able to meet his wife because his wife used to talk down to him which again became another struggle or issue. But as a man he was not able to speak out (CS 1).

Historically, in Nigeria, domestic abuse against men was understood as something to be ridiculed and embarrassed about, battered husbands were seen as lesser men who failed to live up to the societal expectation of a strong man (Adetoro and Adetoro, 2021; Arnocky and Vaillancourt (2014). Cormier (2006) argued that female perpetrators of domestic abuse were

less likely to inflict harm on men and believed when they did it was as a result of them responding to the original harm perpetrated by the man. Here, domestic abuse was viewed only through the physical violence lens. In the example provided by the participant above involved verbal and emotional abuse initiated by the wife on the husband and then a response of physical domestic abuse by the husband on the wife. Only the abuse perpetrated by the husband was properly recognised, and the husband took all the blame. This is as a result of it being physical violence perpetrated by the man while, the initial constant verbal and emotional abuse by the woman was ignored even though it was initiated by the wife. Nigerian society perpetuates the assumption that only women can be victims and men are the main perpetrators, leaving no room for men as possible victims. This assumption stems from a number of theories but amongst other things it stems from the association of domestic abuse with physical abuse and the difficulty with recognising or quantifying verbal and emotional abuse.

5.1.3. Impacts

The impact of domestic abuse is key in understanding domestic abuse because it provides the ways in which key stakeholders and service providers can provide help for victims of domestic abuse. Impacts of domestic abuse on individual victims can range from physical, psychological, behavioural, to cognitive, social and economic effects (Stark and Hester, 2018). It has been suggested by Stark and Hester (2018) and Dobash and Dobash (2004) that the impact of domestic abuse is important to understanding it as a gendered phenomenon i.e. abusive behaviour that results in fear and control is usually gendered and more impactful than other forms of abuse.

5.1.3.1. Impacts on adult men

Victims of domestic abuse can suffer from long term psychological effects such as post-traumatic stress disorder, low self-esteem, anxiety and depression (William and Team, 2009), Participants provided their perception on the impacts domestic abuse had on adult male victims with whom they had worked. In that, they recognised that the effects of domestic abuse are not always physical and are sometimes psychological as a result of verbal and emotional abuse that are not usually visible to the naked eye. This was specifically highlighted by one of the community stakeholders interviewed:

I think the most impact of domestic abuse on men is emotional pain and mental pain because they absorb without seeking treatment or intervention making it to escalate. It can also lead to alcohol and drug abuse (CS 1).

Domestic abuse can take a toll on the physical wellbeing of victims. A community stakeholder participant mentioned how the effect of domestic abuse, especially against men can manifest as other illnesses. He gave the example of how a victim of abuse with high blood pressure was not getting better until he was able to identify and acknowledge he was suffering from domestic abuse:

He suffered silently until he was finally referred to the psychologist because he was not doing better physically (CS 1).

This participant went further to offer the view that domestic abuse sometimes affected the victim's relationship with others and that they were more prone to anger outbursts:

That is true, it has consequences, it will affect their health, their psychological wellbeing, it will also affect their relationship with others, sometimes making them more aggressive, and they will be more prone to anger because they can't speak out. Because of that they can be irritable, depression can set in, anxiety, high blood pressure, all sorts of illnesses will set in, and they die early. Men need to express themselves. In Nigeria, it is worse because of the stigma (CS 1).

William and Team (2009) stated that these effects can affect the employment and education experiences of the victims. The effect of domestic abuse against men manifesting as an illness can be attributed to social stigma and masculinity expectations, many men do not want to appear weak and avoids help and this can manifest as stress. Often times emotional pain can be expressed as physical symptoms.

5.1.3.2. Impacts on children

The negative effect of domestic abuse on children was frequently emphasized by some participants. International research evidence is clear that domestic abuse is harmful to children, Hester (2000), highlighted how children's exposure to abuse affects their emotional wellbeing, Mullender (2004) aligned with this by expanding that children exposed to domestic abuse are not just passive witnesses, domestic abuse creates fear and distress affecting their interactions with other people, later on, Radford et al., (2013) recognised

domestic abuse involving children as a public health concern. Domestic abuse on children is not limited to physical abuse, they can also experience coercive control, which is as harmful as physical abuse (Campo, 2015). Katz (2016) and Callaghan et al., (2018) contends that children that experience coercive control are impacted by limited speech and a loss of identity, and the exposure can lead to fear, self-blame and isolation by children.

Understanding abuse against children is important as many of the participants believed that children's experience of domestic abuse made them susceptible to abuse in the future, as future perpetrators and potential victims. The idea of the cycle of violence has been largely debunked, and several literatures have argued against it, (McCloud & Abdullah, 2024) recognized that early exposure to violence is a risk factor, but it doesn't guarantee that someone will become a perpetrator or victim of abuse. However, some literatures have also linked children who experience domestic abuse with a host of effects e.g. children living in homes where abuse occurs are at a greater risk of being abused themselves and being abusive compared to children from non-abusive homes (William and Team, 2009; Thornton, 2014). Ndubuisi (2021) also posited that children exposed to abuse are at a risk of being abusive adolescents, one of the participants agreed with this stating that:

I would like to add that upbringing also could contribute to domestic abuse. Growing up as a child seeing all that abuse growing up into an adult. The abused person can take the position of the abuser (CS 1).

A community stakeholder stated that this was not specific to anybody or gender but was speaking in the general context. One of the participants from the advocacy group emphasized that as soon as it is discovered that children have witnessed abuse, they always provide or refer the children for psychosocial treatment to reduce the effect of abuse on children:

While couples are going through all that, children are witnessing this abuse and, in the future, we don't want the same thing to reoccur; we don't want it to repeat itself and that is why when they report the matter and it is discovered that children have witnessed the abuse, they will be referred for psychosocial support (AG 4).

Children who witness domestic abuse often experience emotional and behavioural impacts similar to those who are directly abused, such as depression and suicidal tendencies (Thornton, 2014). A law enforcement participant therefore explained that every possible effort is put to reconcile the parents to reduce the effect of abuse against the children:

because it is a family and you know where two elephants are fighting it is the grass that will suffer, where husband and wife are violent, it is the children that will suffer. If they decide to divorce too, it is also the children that will suffer, so we use our wisdom to try to persuade and convince them to reconcile because we don't want these things to bounce on the children (LE 1).

Participants from law enforcement suggested that they were more concerned with seeking to reconcile families that face domestic abuse than to criminalise, this is in accordance with accounts by community stakeholders (local chiefs) that believed domestic abuse to be a private matter to be settled among the family. Hester (2000) found that family courts and support services often minimise the harms of domestic abuse with Humphreys and Thiara (2003) stating that support services failing to take domestic abuse claims seriously, describing it as a private issue:

But most of the time we tell the 'olori ebi' that is, the head of the family to handle matters like this. This is the oldest male of the family, to handle it and whatever decision they make we endorse it. If they bring the matter to us, hmmm those are extreme cases (CS 2).

It is a cultural norm in Nigeria for domestic abuse cases to be settled privately, couples are usually advised to keep family problems disputes within the family (Igwe, 2015; Adetoro and Adetoro, 2021 and Mbaegu and Duntoye, 2022).

It should be noted that isolated conflict and fighting amongst couples is not considered as domestic abuse but (Johnson, 2008) explains that there are times when specific conflict situations escalate to violence. Men and women regularly engage in arguments that can sometimes escalate to violence and according to Johnson can be regarded to as Situational couple violence, control or dominance over the other partner is not the goal in this instance.

5.1.4. Recognition and knowledge of domestic abuse against men

Participants raised the issue that some male victims of domestic abuse might not always recognise or might refuse to recognise that they have experienced abuse. A community stakeholder explained that:

the first thing is to identify what is considered abuse, they might not see it as abuse and just say their wife is just being troublesome. The identification of

what exactly is abuse is very important. There are somethings that Nigerians will never call abuse even though it is (CS 1).

The participants perceived that professionals supporting men experiencing domestic abuse play a crucial role in recognizing and addressing their needs, providing resources, and assisting in their recovery and rebuilding process. This occurs with the view of Wallace et al., (2019) who asserted that many male victims do not believe that they could be victims as the society has tagged domestic abuse as synonymous with abuse against women. The suggestion of being abused is experienced as an insult to their person as a man and it should be something they should be ashamed of. This is also in agreement with George (2007) who suggested that shame is associated with men that do not align with traditional masculinity, he states that it is a great taboo if a man is beaten by a woman and this taboo does not recognise that women can be violent and aggressive.

Most participants recognised that domestic abuse can be experienced by men and felt that it is very important for male victims to acknowledge and identify that they had been abused and after that seek help. However the African society makes it difficult because of the shame and stigma attached to domestic abuse against men (Wright, 2016; Adebayo and Iweala, 2022; Aborisade, 2023):

This appears to be a myth in the African society, but the truth is that there is an increasing trend of domestic of domestic violence against men mostly in the form of emotional/ verbal abuse, starvation, damage to property and in extreme cases assault (JD 2).

But errm if you look at it from the societal angle most men don't believe in the first place that they could be in that situation because they believe it is a man's world. Invariable it is women that are most likely to be in this situation. In fact, they believe that as a man if you are in the situation, you should be ashamed of yourself to say that I have been through this (JD 5).

According to Reis et al., 2024 most men are not aware of domestic abuse directed at them and the few that recognise domestic abuse against men are only aware of physical abuse, he found that men found it hard to recognise themselves as victims of abuse as the word victim

connotes being weak and men are meant to portray traditional masculinity roles of being strong and enforcing power.

5.1.5. Knowledge of domestic abuse involving women

Although knowledge of domestic abuse against women is not the main aim of this study, we cannot discuss domestic abuse at all without first understanding domestic abuse against women as it is the most prevalent (Alhabib, 2010), this is evidenced by the way participants always went back to discuss and acknowledge domestic abuse against women during the course of the interviews and focus group discussions. Some participants mentioned how domestic abuse against women has been normalised as compared to domestic abuse against men:

So, my colleagues do not see it as a good thing for women to abuse men but they see it as normal for men to abuse women, do you understand what I am trying to say? If they see any woman that abused a man, they will see it as 'this woman is a very bad woman see how she does this', but if they see a man abusing a woman, it is not something they react strongly to because they are not surprised but when it is flipped it surprises them and they usually think maybe she is a witch (LE 2).

This participant's response shows that there is a high tolerance for domestic abuse against women while domestic abuse against men is met with little belief.

One law enforcement participant highlighted the influence of religion on his perspective of domestic abuse. It is evident that religion is a major factor in how he approaches domestic abuse, he said that:

But we know that the women are weaker, the bible even says that 'best honour to the women of weaker sex' they are very weak, in terms of capacity, financially and weight. So, we give more concentration to the women (LE 1).

The assertion made by this participant highlights the societal neglect regarding the abusive conduct exhibited by men, whilst there is a social acceptance of abuse and violence against women. While not the primary aim of the research, exploring the perspectives of study

participants on domestic violence directed towards women has yielded valuable insights into societal interpretations of domestic abuse affecting both men and women.

5.2. EXPLANATIONS FOR DOMESTIC ABUSE PERPETRATED BY WOMEN AGAINST MEN

In understanding the Nigerian societies responses to male victims of domestic abuse, it is imperative to explain the rationale for domestic abuse. This theme will answer two research questions; one, how do service responders understand and explain domestic abuse against men in Nigeria? And what are the social-cultural factors affecting the way service responders' approach domestic abuse? The participants gave insights on what they experienced as the major explanations for domestic abuse against men in Nigeria.

5.2.1. Past experiences of abuse

One of the main explanations provided by study participants for domestic abuse against men is women's past experience of domestic abuse. Here the view was that a woman's past experience of domestic abuse can make her defensive and aggressive. According to one of the advocacy group participants:

What I say about such women is that unfortunately, they might be reacting to some sort of abuse they had seen, maybe they saw their mothers take beatings lying down and they have decided, you know what it is never going to be me, so they come into the marriage extremely aggressive such that even when they find a good man, they just keep lashing out (AG 1).

However, many researchers have stated that past experience of domestic abuse is not a cause of domestic abuse but can be a risk factor for domestic abuse (Whitfield et al., 2003; Velez and Johnson, 2018; Jennings et al., 2013 and Papalia, 2025). Some other researchers believe past experience increases the possibility of a person being a victim or perpetrator of domestic abuse (Riggs et al., 2000) and that past experience of domestic abuse led more to emotional distress, isolation, and an inability to seek help (Entilli and Cipolletta, 2017).

It is important for service responders to identify this risk factors and provide psychological support for the victims.

Female aggression is often seen as retaliation against male aggression or as self-defence (Dobash et al., 1992) rather than an as active strategy used by a small but not insignificant

number of women (Douglass et al., 2020). When it comes to female aggression, society puts more attention on female self-defence, and this takes away from a woman's capacity to make sound individual decisions and not only deprives women of agency but also means that their victims are not taken as seriously (Allen and Bradley, 2018). Participants gave different reasons for female perpetration of domestic abuse. In the following quote, this particular participant believed that it was a result of past experiences and a desire to protect themselves as a result:

Honestly, I just feel like it's a scorned woman who is just lashing out based on her own pain, he may have never hit her before but maybe she saw that abuse growing up, so I think it is from a place of 'I won't take crap from any man' so before he can even serve it, I will dish my own out quickly. So umm honestly, I think that is it because I don't think a woman will necessarily hit her husband because he cannot provide for the family and social constructs, but I honestly think it just comes from women who are just trying to guard themselves so much so that they are very aggressive to their spouses (AG 1).

Some researchers have argued that self-defence is not a key reason for female aggression as many think (Hines and Malley-Morrison, 2001; Hettrich, and O'Leary, 2007). This is not to say that self-defence cannot be a reason for female aggression, the reasons for female aggression and female perpetration of domestic abuse are complex and it involves a combination of societal and societal factors, for example; it can happen because of psychological, social and situational factors like; childhood exposure to domestic abuse, learned behaviour, a need to assert control in relationships self-defence and mental health issues (Douglass et al., 2020).

5.2.1.1. Childhood experience of domestic abuse:

Childhood experience of domestic abuse is a form of past experiences of domestic abuse, some researchers believe that exposure to violence in childhood can make children take domestic abuse as a learned behaviour (Douglas et al., 2020). Many participants emphasized the protection of children from the influence of domestic abuse, believing that children's

exposure to domestic abuse can make them accustomed to abuse, making them see it as normal, one particular participant stated that:

I would like to add that upbringing also could contribute to domestic abuse. Growing up as a child seeing all that abuse growing up into an adult. The abused person can take the position of the abuser (CS 1).

The participants believed that childhood experience of domestic abuse could be a contributor to domestic abuse, so they believed that it was essential for children that had experienced domestic abuse to have psychological help. Participants believed that children being psychological assessed and helped would help reduce the risk of children being victims or perpetrators of domestic abuse:

For children they will be compelled to go for psychosocial tests, so they can be talked out of the abuse, so they will know that it is wrong, what daddy and mummy are doing is wrong and it has criminal penalty, so they won't have to be like daddy and mummy when they grow up (AG 4).

5.2.2. Reasons for domestic abuse against men

Participants put forward several reasons for domestic abuse against men. In line with the view of Adebayo and Iweala, (2022), reasons for domestic abuse are not always clear cut, the reasons can be complex and can vary across various people and circumstances. This could also be seen as factors that trigger or contribute to domestic abuse against men, but for the purpose of this study, the term reasons for male domestic abuse will be used. This sub-theme represents participants explanation for what they think are the reasons for domestic abuse perpetrated by women against men, this can vary from challenges to masculinity (toxic masculinity/hegemonic masculinity), revenge or retaliation, self-defence and economic conditions (poverty, job loss, drugs and alcoholism).

Participants in this study put forward reasons below what they believed to be the factors that contribute to domestic abuse:

5.2.2.1. Power struggle

Power struggles can arise when couples grapple for control in a relationship, this can manifest as manipulative behaviours, fight for dominance and lack of compromise. Where there is dependency, there is a possibility of abuse (Babcock et al., 1993). Societal norms and gender roles can contribute to female perpetration of domestic abuse, as women may feel pressure to assert control or power in their relationships (Douglas et al., 2020). One of the participants from the advocacy group gave an example of power struggle which also occurs between wealthy couples, domestic abuse occurs to everyone irrespective of wealth:

domestic abuse occurs irrespective of wealth, it does not respect wealth because we have received very wealthy persons their own problem is not actually money, the problem is actually the power imbalance (AG 2).

They believed that especially with domestic abuse against men by women, it was usually because of the power the woman has over the man, and if a woman has a better job, money and education than the man, this could lead to domestic abuse when she tries to exert her power on the man. As one participant specified:

Sometimes when a partner has the power has a better standing in the family, has a better education and is the major provider in this instance the woman, there could be abuse against the man (CS 1).

He went further to mention that domestic abuse occurs when there is a disparity of power, it did not matter if it is a man or woman it can happen generally:

errrrr domestic abuse comes into play when there is a disparity in power, when there is oppression, the other person has a higher power than the recipient, usually the perpetrator has more power and manipulative (CS 1).

While it is true that the person with higher power can sometimes be the perpetrator, some research claims that if the wife has more education or higher income than the husband, the likelihood of husband-to-wife violence increases (Babcock et al., 1993). This is because the husband will try to exert his power as the man of the house because of his insecurity (ibid).

5.2.2.2. Socio-economic conditions

The majority of participants believed that socio-economic conditions contributed to domestic abuse. They specifically mentioned that poverty was a major contributor to domestic abuse against men in Nigeria, and believed that poverty breeds an environment of tension, making both couples in the relationship on edge. As such, it acts as a trigger for domestic abuse:

So, for men, one thing we realised is that errrh one of the biggest triggers of domestic violence is poverty, that is, lack of finance. Sometimes the perpetrator is not necessarily an evil person or a narcissist, I'm not saying we have not seen some of those cases but sometimes it is just that the financial strain is a lot, there is a lot of tension in the home and then the slightest thing triggers the anger, triggers the temper and they lash out, they hit, you know they may be going through pain of their own and that is the only way they could interpret it (AG 1).

This advocacy group member talks about how poverty can bring about mutual domestic abuse, giving the example of verbal abuse perpetrated by the woman on the man for not being able to uphold his role as a provider, describing how this causes tension and can in turn cause the man to be physically abusive to his partner. This however goes against the findings in Okoye et al., 2018 where they suggested that socio-economic factors had no influence on domestic violence. Other participants went further to state that when domestic abuse occurs because of poverty, victims of the abuse cannot leave because they cannot afford to:

you find out that a lot of people stay in abusive relationships because they can't stand on their own two feet financially and otherwise (AG 1).

However, a few participants believed money was not a contributor to domestic abuse, stating that they had had wealthy victims come in too:

And of course, finances, the reason I did not mention this at first is because domestic abuse occurs irrespective of wealth, it does not respect wealth because we have received very wealthy persons their own problem is not actually money (AG 2).

The most prevalent view by the participants was that men neglecting their responsibilities in the families was a major cause of increased domestic abuse against men (Mutahi, 2017). They specifically said that domestic abuse could occur against men:

if they have not been taking responsibility at home, mostly for their children, maintenance, upkeep and school fees (AG 4).

Inability for men to provide for their family (JD 1).

In the society, there are distinct gender roles and clear expectations of men and women in Nigeria. There is an expectation for men to provide and protect and for women to nurture and take care of the home, when these roles are not achieved, it can lead to fights and inadvertently domestic abuse (Olatunji et al., 2023).

One of the participants then voiced a recommendation to the government to reduce poverty which would inadvertently reduce domestic abuse:

To me I think the government should improve our economy and let men have good jobs, because due to our investigation it is evident that if a man does not

have money and cannot take care of his home, you will have domestic violence (LE 2).

5.2.2.3. Infidelity

Another factor that the participants identified as a factor contributing to domestic abuse is men's infidelity:

Where the relationship is spousal, causes can range from infidelity, family interference to financial problems (JD 4).

Cheating is also a cause (LE 1).

Then at the end of the day when I asked what can lead to beating up a man like this, the woman just told us that the man is not responsible, he is following other women around, he does not drop money at home and that was what led to that abuse (LE 2).

It is worthy to note that, while infidelity can be a source of conflict within a relationship, it is not the sole cause of domestic abuse, other factors can also contribute to the occurrence of domestic abuse (Okoye et al., 2018).

5.2.2.4. Societal Expectations

Societal expectations are these expectations that can lead to a pattern of conflicts when both parties have different expectations, and these expectations are not met. Societal construct and expectations come from culture, tradition, norms and religion. E.g., when a woman is not fulfilling their stereotypical gender role, or the duties expected of her as a wife, domestic abuse can occur, participants suggested that:

ummm also societal constructs you know expectations from women, a woman should be this or that, a woman should be seen but not heard, a woman should

never attack her husband, she should never talk back, a woman's place is under her husband's feet (AG 1).

While the above quote focuses on a woman's stereotypical gender role, men also have duties and there are also stereotypical gender roles attached to them, they are expected to be the providers and protectors of the home and this is particularly important in Nigeria, and when the man is not able to meet this expectation, for example when he is not able to provide for his family, this can lead to abuse in the home.

Another participant said when speaking about societal expectations in Nigeria, there is a certain respect placed on boy children and from a young age they are thought to demand respect from the women, the participant said when women do not adhere to these expectations, this can lead to conflict amongst couples and then domestic abuse:

Key causes, hmm I will say its societal patriarchy, so yeah, we are raised in a society where from birth, naturally we are expected to accord some level of respect for the boy child and for the man and also as a man the society expects them to move and act. They are expected to demand certain things from their women, so that is societal patriarchy and I believe that is the beginning of the causes (AG 2).

She went further to state that culture and religion are the major contributors to these societal expectations:

we have cultural perspective to it too, culture and religion. Some religions subject women to men and some cultures too (AG 2).

In recent years with the development of feminism, women's place in society has been changing and there has been a slight shift in power relations. While patriarchal structures are still deeply rooted gender relationships have been changing (Mawa, 2020).

The influence of culture and religion can also be seen to be discussed by another participant here, where the participant said that:

Culture! Culture surely contributes to abuse. When we talk about culture, we also see culture within the religious aspect as she just said, we find out there are people that are justifying abuse on both sides, basically the men justifying abuse that they are the head, the dominion mandate using culture and religion as a cover (CS 1).

5.2.3. Challenges to Masculinity

As discussed in chapter 2, hegemonic masculinity is a form of societal expectation, and it describes how a real man is supposed to be, these expectations can be toxic or positive (Lazarus et al., 2011).

Hegemonic masculinity is an aspirational idea of a man than an achievable one for most men (Mfecane, 2024). It is maintained through cultural norms, social consent and practice (Chitando et al., 2024).

African masculinity celebrates dominant men and frowns at discussions on gender equality or vulnerable men (Derry, 2020). In Nigeria, masculinity is heavily influenced by culture and religion, with traditional norms expecting men to be the main provider and protector of women and children. Men who are unable to meet this standard or ideal struggle with their identity as ‘proper’ men (Harris, 2018). They are expected to prove their masculinity by being brave, strong and untouchable, which unfortunately excludes them as possible victims of domestic abuse. There are masculine expectations that if a man is in pain, he is not allowed to show his pain or cry in public, these expectations make it difficult for male victims of domestic violence to report the abuse. Men usually do not speak out about their experiences due to the stigma attached to them being victims of female-perpetrated domestic abuse (Thobejane et al., 2018).

The participants said that toxic masculinity and societal expectations have made it impossible for male victims to talk about their experiences:

Also, domestic abuse against men can make men to feel they have failed their responsibility as a man or have their egos crushed, they have rubbished their ego as a man. They are not so willing to talk about it (JD 5).

Masculinity in Africa is shaped by peculiar socio-cultural dynamics, for example; in Africa, there is a strong connection to spirituality and community expectations (Mfecane 2024). Religion influences the way many Africans see the world, impacting social structures, laws and policies. It is therefore important to study more places as it identifies the issues applicable and peculiar to that region that are not addressed in the literature dominated by the Global North.

As Westmarland and Burrell (2023) asserted, men experiencing domestic abuse especially at the hands of their female partners challenges their conformity and perception of traditional masculinity. There is a need to focus on positive masculinities as a key protective and violence prevention strategy, to promoting safety and peace (Lazarus et al., 2011).

5.3. Summary

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the findings here answered research question one and two. It has presented findings that address the following questions; how do service responders understand and explain domestic abuse against men in Nigeria? And what are the social-cultural factors affecting the way service responders' approach domestic abuse?

For research question 1, the findings identify that the participants have a diverse understanding and explanation of domestic abuse against men based on their personal experiences and even identified a peculiar form of domestic abuse known as religious/spiritual abuse which is not always visible in Global North literature.

For research question 2, the findings demonstrate that service responders approaches to domestic abuse are not just influenced by their professional training or laws but by their personal experiences and socio-cultural factors; such as expectations from culture, traditions and religion.

Two main themes were discussed; Understandings of Domestic abuse against men and Explanations for domestic abuse against men. Evidence from the research suggests that when the participants were defining domestic abuse, they did not just focus on women as victims of domestic abuse, many of them specifically touched on abuse against men, women and children, they recognized domestic abuse against men when explaining domestic abuse.

Most of the responses provided by the study participants were determined by their personal and professional experiences with major influence from religion and culture. In Nigeria, culture and religion are major influences in law making and the way it is interpreted (Igwe, 2015). Nigeria is a highly religious country, and this is evidenced in the three major sources of laws in Nigeria; the common law, Islamic Law and customary law (Oba, 2011) culture and religion are deeply intertwined in the day to day lives of every Nigerian, it is therefore a major factor in how they approach, understand and explain domestic abuse.

Stakeholders and service responders have a high acceptance of domestic abuse against women while having a low acceptance of domestic abuse against men. This means that, because of how often domestic abuse against women is reported many of the key stakeholders are open minded and are more accepting of female victims of domestic abuse but find it difficult to accept men as possible victims of domestic abuse.

Furthermore, the study participants suggested that there are several factors that can contribute to domestic abuse against men; power struggle between couples, socio-economic conditions, infidelity and societal expectations, these factors depend on the individual and circumstances of each case, they mentioned that it is important for key stakeholders and service responders to identify this risk factors and provide psychological support for all victims.

The next chapter will examine the key stakeholders' views on the barriers in help seeking and challenges in responding to domestic abuse against men.

CHAPTER SIX: KEY STAKEHOLDERS' VIEWS ON THE BARRIERS IN HELP SEEKING AND CHALLENGES IN RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC ABUSE AGAINST MEN

6.0. Introduction

This chapter will address research question three, which is; What do service responders think are the main challenges in responding to male victims of domestic abuse? The main topics revealed from the interviews and focus group discussions are: Understanding service responses and perceptions on help seeking. Subthemes were generated from these topics and are dissected below, outlining data from the interviews and focus group discussions.

6.1. UNDERSTANDING SERVICE RESPONSES

Participants described the challenges they faced as key stakeholders and service responders in providing adequate services to male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria.

There are 8 sub themes that emerged from the data. They are explored below, with each of them giving insights into the understandings of services responders and the challenges in responding to male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria. The interviews and focus group discussions explored the training available to service responders on domestic abuse against men; the lack of representation for male victims in services and campaigns; the differences in the responses and approach of services responders to male victims and female victims of domestic abuse; adequacy of resources for male victims; motivation for the job as services responders; awareness and sensitization carried out for domestic abuse against men, and; finally improvements to service responses for domestic abuse against men in Nigeria. These sub themes are further analysed below:

6.1.1. Training issues

One of the major challenges faced by service responders is lack of training. In the course of the interviews and discussion with the participants, lack of training was identified as a major challenge in helping and identifying male victims of domestic abuse among service responders. Many of the participants acknowledged that there was a lack of training available for key stakeholders on domestic abuse against men; they believed raising awareness to

recognise the various forms of domestic abuse and how they affect men specifically should be included in all trainings organised for service responders.

This was a common view expressed by participants, regardless of their specific job roles or the service they belonged to. Participants were asked specifically about whether they were aware of any trainings that focused on men as possible victims of domestic abuse; some of the participants stated that there were no trainings:

There is no special training on men as victims of domestic abuse (CS 1).

The participant below, from the advocacy group agreed there were no trainings, but it was something the organisation was now looking into:

Right now, not that I know of, but I know that we are definitely looking at that male victim angle a whole lot more now (AG 1).

While there is no training for male victims, this participant from the Judiciary believes that men are given every opportunity to express their grievances:

Well, ummm we don't have any training that highlights men as possible victims, but men are given opportunities to express their grievances, and we let them know that all is not lost, and we are here to help (JD 5).

The statement that 'men are given the opportunity to express their grievances' might seem encouraging; however, it is clear that there is little training to help the service responders deal with the complexities of male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria.

Other participants stated that training is available for service providers who support women victims and that men were usually mentioned in passing during these trainings, with no particular focus on men as victims:

yes, we do. We are ummm aware that umm these men go through it so yeah, we get like the training that mention men as potential victims. But yeah, it is not specifically tailored for men, they are usually just mentioned in passing or amongst others (AG 3).

Nobody talks about male domestic abuse. So, it is a good thing that the world is gradually looking into abuse against men. We have trainings but they usually focus on the women as victims (CS 1).

Hmmm let me just say we have lectures; they sometimes mention men as possible victims (LE 2).

One particular community stakeholder emphasized on the importance of training service responders on men as possible victims of domestic abuse, he stated that:

I believe we should have special training so we can understand the biological makeup of the men and why they behave the way they do, so the world can see their own vulnerability too (CS 1).

When the participants were asked about who provides trainings on domestic abuse, a participant from the advocacy group claimed it was planned by the organisation:

the agency organises them, but umm sometimes our fellow colleagues, or they invite an expert in the field but as I said they are not specifically tailored for men (AG 3)

The clear lack of available training for key stakeholders and service responders which focuses specifically on domestic abuse against men makes it hard for this abuse to be readily recognised. Further, it highlights the lack of acknowledgement of domestic abuse against men. Stakeholders lack the skills and knowledge necessary to engage confidently and competently with male victims of domestic abuse. It also highlights that when they do respond to men, it is seen as an afterthought, not something that is built into service provision from the onset. Research suggests that it is very important for service responders to understand the nature of the crime to provide adequate service (Davies and Barlow, 2024), without adequate training it is therefore impossible for service responders to provide suitable help for victims of domestic abuse. Training of key stakeholders contributes to breaking stereotypes and misconceptions attached to domestic abuse against men (Schucan Bird et al., 2024). Training service responders does not just ensure recognising men as possible victims of domestic abuse but also ensures responding properly (Smith et al., 2014). Liang et al., (2005) identifies the importance of training on sociocultural dynamics. They state that seeking help is influenced by a person's culture and religion. They stressed the importance of

training service providers on cultural dynamics as it is critical to provide adequate and effective help.

6.1.2. Awareness

This section focuses on acts by the key stakeholders that promotes the protection of domestic abuse against men. It also focuses on the steps adopted by service responders to educate the public about domestic abuse against men and about the service they provide for male victims.

Two participants from advocacy groups mention ways they advocate and make the public aware of domestic abuse against men in Nigeria. They mention that it is done by going on community engagements and sensitising the community;

We engage about 400 men to tell them about how they could also be survivors of domestic abuse and they should speak out (AG 2).

We keep sensitising them, keep talking to them, educating them, letting them know that it is wrong and because it is a criminal offence, you know we normally tell them that once it is being committed, it is not going to be between you and the survivor, it is going to be between you and the state. So, there is zero tolerance in this state, we are going on community engagements, talking to them, enlightening them (AG 4).

The participant went further to give an example of a specific community engagement that sensitized the community on male responsibilities they could adopt that questioned the societal definition of a stereotypical traditional man in Nigeria through a program called ‘men wey sabi’. Men wey sabi is in pidgin English directly translating to men who know their stuff;

Oh, we are doing that regularly, like today we had a program called ‘men wey sabi’. Where we bring them together, we sensitise them that men wey sabi don’t hurt their women, men wey sabi they are the ones helping out in the house, they are helping their wives with house chores, diapers, wash plates, cook and so on. And there is going to be a competition, so we ask three men to

come out, we give them food to cook, like jollof rice, and we give them gifts at the end of the program, we engage with them (AG 4).

While this quote does not directly recognise men as victims, it encourages sensitivity in men, highlighting the importance of vulnerability and departing from the traditional and cultural expectation of a stoic man. This social engagement sees an agency that handles domestic abuse engaging with men. It has been highlighted several times in this thesis the difficulty in associating with men on vulnerable matters like domestic abuse. However, this community engagement can be seen as an opening to encourage men to depart from harmful hegemonic masculinity practices. It could be a pathway to help men recognise themselves as possible victims of domestic abuse and the reasons they find it difficult to disclose experienced domestic abuse.

6.1.3. Lack of representation

This subtheme describes what can be done by service responders to encourage male victims feel seen; it focuses on how male victims do not have men they can relate to. This will include discussions on lack of men that male victims of domestic abuse can identify with, making it difficult for them feel there is a safe space for them. Domestic abuse against men is rarely acknowledged, and this makes it difficult to find men that male victims can relate with. This includes their absence in publishing materials and invisibility in response services. This is a significant omission since Carmo et al., 2011 found that men who received help from services that work with male victims of domestic abuse reported that sharing their experiences in a support group with other men who had been through a similar experience provided a 'safe' place to challenge gender norms and reduce feelings of shame and embarrassment surrounding masculinity and victimisation (Randle & Graham, 2011).

Two advocacy group participants put themselves in the shoes of male victims and stated they would feel more comfortable speaking up if they had someone they could identify with. They likened this to a symbol of advocacy, stating that men will feel more able to speak out when there is a man on the advocacy team sharing similar stories and past experiences of domestic abuse as it makes them feel seen and heard and encourages them that there is actually help for male victims of domestic abuse:

I think one of the things I have seen or one of the things is that if the male victims come out too to say okay I have faced this thing, you see women who come out showing themselves as examples, and saying 'I have been through

this thing', it also encourages other people to speak out because those people are able to relate to their stories so if we get a male victim who comes out to say I have been through this, I guess it would also encourage other men to speak out. When we ask men for example to come out that we have programs that we want men who are victims of domestic violence or in better words survivors of domestic violence, when we ask them to come and speak at this program, we do not get this ummm support from them. It is very very difficult to get them to come and say oh I have been through this issue, or I am facing so and so in my marriage. Then I think if one male survivor is able to come out, other people too will be encouraged. It might not be so much but for sure, other people will also be encouraged to speak out (AG 3).

for me, my angle is 'when I see someone who looks like me or someone that I can identify with, it makes me more confident in whatever it is you are doing' so we want more men to come out, if we had a few men come out and say you know what I have actually experienced this, more men will come actually out and not suffer in silence anymore as well. If he can be bold enough to come out, then I will too but it is so hard. We are really hoping and praying and keeping our fingers crossed that we would find men that will stand in the place of advocacy for us so more men can come forward with their stories as well (AG 1).

It is apparent that despite the anticipated benefits of men sharing their experiences, few men come forward to act as advocates for others. AG 1 went further to state that their organisation is hoping for men to be involved in advocacy for male victims of domestic abuse:

so, we are really hoping we can get more men to jump on the band wagon and more men to be advocate for us as well so that more men can come out and ask for help (AG 1).

A participant from the judiciary also emphasized the importance of media representation and visibility:

More cases on domestic abuse against men should be publicized (JD 2).

Representation makes male victims feel a sense of identification and acceptance, encouraging men to come forward.

6.1.4. Lack of a gendered approach

Most of the participants interviewed stated that male victims of domestic abuse are not treated differently to female victims; two participants from the advocacy group stated that:

I umm I will say we are very unbiased people in this organisation, we try as much possible to handle cases with men the same way, the same pattern we address the one for women, so we don't look biased (AG 3).

you know the law is not gender biased, when they come around, we also handle it the same way we do for women (AG 4).

While the advocacy groups, Judiciary, and law enforcement officers all gave similar answers on their approach to male victims of domestic abuse, it is important to dive deeper into the differences in their responses based on the service provider. The Judiciary and law enforcement officer's responses are based on the gender neutrality of the law while the responses by the advocacy groups are based on their experiences with the victims.

The responses from the service responders focused on their lack of bias in their approach to male victims of domestic abuse and treating people the same and equally, this response could have been to provide me with the answer they thought I wanted to hear, this however neglects the special needs of each victim, as treating people the same does not mean they are treated equally (Schmesser, 2007) since treating people the same does not recognise that they have different start points, needs and gendered contexts.

These cases even when filed do not have priority over cases of domestic abuse against women or any other case at that. The procedure under the Domestic Violence Practice Direction is usually followed as there is no hard and fast rule about it. The complaint filed would still have to be proved

notwithstanding that it is against a man. Gender plays no specific role in the response level (JD 4).

Errr if we base it on percentage, we know women are more susceptible as victims, the number of women victims outweigh that of men, but we are first of all neutral and we listen to every domestic case the same way (LE 1).

No, we handle it normally like we attend to any abuse, we treat the cases equally, we don't attend to it differently. We do it equally (LE 2).

One of the law enforcement participants agreed that all domestic abuse cases are handled the same way and pointed to a well-known case about a popular musician who died in 2023 after numerous abuse claims filed by him on his father and colleagues. While this case is not an intimate partner violence or domestic abuse case, it involved abuse by a father against his grown son and displayed the lack of response or seriousness attached to male victims of abuse. The participant believed Nigerian society was going in the right direction because there was a public outcry for justice after his death, he believed it was progress for male victims of abuse, claiming that the support given by the society to the male victim was usually preserved for female victims:

From our side, I think the service is adequate, because we treat all the abuse the same. Like if you go on social media now, there is a debate going on one singer, Mohbad, that was abused till he died although it is not domestic abuse, you can see how the nation demanded justice for him and he is a man, before it was not like that. If it is a woman, people usually demand for justice for them but this time it is a man and they demanded for justice for him, so, I think it is getting normal now (LE 2).

The abuse had been reported to law enforcement before his death with no real outcome and it was only after his death that the allegations were taken seriously and his father and friends were taken to court, only then was there a public outcry for justice. Many times, the reports of abuse by men are not taken seriously until there is grave physical harm or death.

The views that domestic abuse perpetrated against men are approached similarly to domestic abuse perpetrated against women is supported by participants from the judiciary, law enforcement and advocacy groups. The participants from the advocacy groups said they approached all domestic cases the same way because they did not want to be labelled as biased. Similarly, one of the participants from law enforcement believed approaching domestic abuse the same way across board fostered equal treatment. This signifies an interesting finding because it implies that these participants are more concerned with how they are perceived than how they act or what the victims may deserve. Essentially, most of the participants from the judiciary believed there was no sentiment in law, therefore they approached all domestic abuse cases the same way.

Other participants believed that they did approach male victims of domestic abuse differently, recognising the need for a gentler approach with men, the next three quotes agree that male victims of domestic abuse have to be approached differently, and a constant thread is their unwillingness to come forward. As explained by Hogan et al; (2021) men often face negative experiences when discussing their abuse, especially when their initial attempts to talk to family and friends result in dismissal and ridicule, this makes men cynical about asking for help. Thereby putting the burden on the service providers and key stakeholders to provide a positive experience for these men. This is done by approaching male victims in non-judgemental and caring ways and validating their experiences:

I would say we deal with them differently in that we are very careful, we are a lot gentler in our approach, we try as much as possible not to make them panic in anywhere because it is hard enough for them to even come out and admit they need this help so we try as much as possible to make them as comfortable as possible, we answer their questions even if they have a million and one questions and they do because you know they are just like 'am I sure I want to do this? Why am I here?' ... we try as much as possible to calm them down and make them comfortable as much as possible. We try to get them talking as well, we don't just bombard them with information. We always try to reassure them and ask them what they will be comfortable with the whole procedure, we ask them will you be comfortable with this? Is this okay with you? (AG 1).

A judicial officer agreed that he approached male victims of domestic abuse differently, stating that male victims of domestic abuse need to feel safe and validated to express their need for help:

They are not so willing to talk about it except for where you have really inputted the trust in them that look, right here, you are in safe hands, we would get help and it is not a new thing. You are not the first person this thing is happening to; you are not the first man this is happening to. Yes, it is a challenge but there is a way out for you if you talk about it (JD 5).

A similar sentiment was expressed in the focus group discussion by community stakeholder participants; they stated that service responders working with male victims of domestic abuse have to be sensitive to the needs of male victims by being on the lookout for signs of domestic abuse as men do not always recognise or accept that they could be possible victims of domestic abuse as there is a deep-rooted belief especially in Africa that men cannot be abused by women (Tshoane, 2023). According to these participants, special attention has to be given to their body languages and the way they speak:

Actually, if you don't look for it you won't find it. So, anybody providing intervention must always have that suspicion that something might be happening in the home and if you are not careful with how you put it, you won't get the information because the man will want to cover it up or play it down, or there is nothing wrong. It has to be from your own assessment because the men would not come with that presentation of abuse unlike the women that will outrightly say they have been abused; men will not come out to say that, and they find it hard to come to terms with it. You have to be sharp-witted to check for the signs. Even when you explain it to them, you have to tease it out of them and let them know these things you are explaining is called abuse (CS 1).

As a chaplain giving emotional and spiritual support, what I do is pray and sometimes when I ask for their prayer requests, they sometimes from their body language, tone and the uncompleted statements you will realise that the man is going through some form of abuse (CS 1).

According to this judicial officer, it is important for male victims of domestic abuse to have someone they can relate to, and this occurs when service responders understand the viewpoints of male victims. Hogan et al (2021) posits that there is a need for better recognition of male victims in the society, he emphasized the need for male centric services tailored to their needs and increased visibility for male victims, a sentiment similarly shared by Tshoane et al; (2023):

My experience so far with dealing with domestic abuse against men is that errrh they are not too happy to talk about it, particularly if you as the mediator or the listener does not understand what they are telling you from their own angle, you are not trying to put yourself in his shoes, they might not want to come out openly and say all that is on their mind (JD 5).

6.1.5. Responses

This theme focuses on the responses that male victims of domestic abuse receive from the wider society and service responders in Nigeria when they report experiences of domestic abuse. It includes descriptions and examples given by participants on the nature and adequacy of informal responses from family, friends, religious leaders as well as more formal responses from law enforcement and key stakeholders. Hogan et al; (2021), found out that many male victims preferred support from their family and friends over formal support services, Hines et al; (2022) emphasizes the importance of family members as they play an important role in helping male victims recognise their abuse and also seek the help that they need. It is therefore important for the responses that the responses male victims receive to be positive, especially from their family members as they are the first line of interaction in making sure a victim of abuse seeks help.

This section is closely linked to the section above on approaches to working with male victims of domestic abuse, while the section above addressed how service providers interact with male victims, this section analyses the responses male victims get when they speak up on their experiences as victims of domestic abuse:

People laugh, and they make jokes of men suffering from abuse from their wife and some are irritated because they belief you should be man enough to

handle your home. They see them as failures, they make derogatory statements about them because they believe that a man should be strong, coupled with the fact the way we describe men in our society, they are synonymous to strength and control. I can't imagine telling a colleague that is not a psychiatrist that, 'that man is being abused at home' they will be surprised and make statements on how the man cannot make his wife submissive, your wife cannot listen to you and all that. The discrimination, the gest, the name calling, the shame (CS 1).

The above quote aligns with Hogan et al; (2021) as he suggests that men frequently report experiencing negative responses when seeking help from family and friends, police officers and professional support services. These experiences included being treated with doubt, disbelief, dismissal and scorn. The Nigerian society is heavily influenced by masculine ideologies, and it impacts how the society reacts to domestic abuse against men. When men do not meet these societal expectations of masculinity they feel shame, are ostracised and face ridicule from friends and family (Hogan et al., 2022). Aborisade (2023), specifically stated that male victims experience secondary victimization from some police officers when seeking help, they are exposed to mocking and dismissive attitudes.

The participants gave their perspective on examples of responses that male victims have received, with one of the participants from the advocacy group stating that they are mostly asked to man up when reported:

it is just very weird hearing that a man came to report that his wife was beating him, they'll just be like you are a man, 'man up, steel up, grow a pair, deal with it'. So yeah, societal construct... (AG 1).

According to Hines and Douglas (2009), being abused by a female partner can feel emasculating, considering the societal expectation of dominance placed on men. AG 1 went further to recognise that some religious leaders that try to cover up reports by brainwashing their victims, however this act did not just pertain to male victims but to all victims of domestic abuse. Nwokocha (2023) contented that religion contributes to the silence around domestic abuse, he referenced a popular musician that died in the hands of her partner and said that many victims remain in abusive homes because of their religious beliefs, societal pressure and the stigma associated with domestic abuse. He stated that religious leaders are

known to encourage victims to remain with their abusers, advising them to pray for their abusers (Nwokocha, 2023):

Religious leaders trying to brainwash them and cover up the issues with scriptures, and it should not be so (AG 1).

While community stakeholders (local chiefs) who participated in the research had never dealt with domestic abuse against men, they recognised that it happened and it had just not been brought before them, which I believe could be as a result of the strong cultural and traditional expectations of men. In Nigeria, men are expected to be the authoritative figures, the strong traditional men and it would be unheard of to bring a case that challenged their masculinity before the local chief or king, it is worthy of note that there was no woman amongst the council of chiefs that participated in the research. The local chiefs suggested that a woman abusing her husband would be an atrocity punishable with banishment from the community, the participants shook their heads and sighed when asked about male victims and saw domestic abuse against men as a serious misconduct, they emphasized that domestic abuse against women can be settled by the head of the family but considered domestic abuse against men as a crime, specifically mentioning the ‘she will be banished’:

The king is always open to hear cases and the people are aware of that. I believe if that happens, that is any domestic abuse case they will know to come and talk to us. But most of the time we tell the ‘olori ebi’ that is, the head of the family to handle matters like this. This is the oldest male of the family, to handle it and whatever decision they make we endorse it. If they bring the matter to us, hmmm those are extreme cases but if such a case is brought before us, the king will be advised to banish such a person from the community if she is found guilty of such atrocity (CS 2).

When the local chiefs were asked if domestic abuse against men was an example of the extreme cases, they agreed emphatically. There is a gendered response to domestic abuse, male and female victims receive varied responses (Westmarland and Burrell, 2023). Arnocky and Vaillancourt (2014) asserts that male victims are often viewed as being responsible for their victimization and their experiences seen as less serious in comparison to female victims of abuse. Two participants, from the Judiciary and Law enforcement believed that reconciliation and settlement to be the most prevalent solution given to most domestic abuse victims:

Frequent chats with colleagues show that they simply promote settlement amongst the parties, urging the woman to apologise. Most times the cases end up being withdrawn and struck out (JD 3).

Responsibility on domestic abuse is simple, it is to resolve the conflict between the parties, between the wife and husbands that is just my role. When they report the case to us, we see if it is a case that we have to arrest that person or we have to invite the person for example, if it is the husband that reported the case we will invite the wife for questioning, what led to the domestic abuse and what caused it, that is the rule. We will invite both parties together to settle it and if we cannot settle it, we will then transfer it to the court (LE 2).

This push for reconciliation by some of the participants could be because of the stigma still attached to divorce and separation in Nigeria, especially by the older generation. Couples are encouraged to keep family matters private and when domestic abuse occurs, they are expected to find ways to reconcile and settle. As stated by the law enforcement officer, domestic abuse cases are usually expected to be settled privately (Igwe, 2015) or when brought to the police, he believed that it is only extremely serious domestic abuse cases like physical abuse that make it to Court, which can be problematic as encourages ignoring other forms of domestic abuse like economic, emotional and sexual, which research points cause serious harm (Mahoney, 2011). The response by the judicial officer could also be a statement to the institutional and systemic challenges, for example, the under enforcement of the laws on domestic abuse in Nigeria and the overburdened judicial system in Nigeria (Ikuteyijo et al., 2024; Babatope et al., 2025 and Isaka, et al., 2025).

This participant from the advocacy group believed that there is a rigorous burden on men to prove that they had been victims of domestic abuse, as they are not naturally believed. The participant went further to state that because they had worked in the support service industry for a while, their approach to male victims of domestic abuse is different but that the general public and society will find it hard believing a man claiming to have been domestically abused:

if a man should come out and say that he is abused, you will want to really ask for some good evidence to back up. For a woman, you do not necessarily immediately ask for evidence because everybody just naturally believes when

a woman says that a man is abusing her; but if a man says he is abused he has to go an extra mile to provide evidence of his claim. But you know, of course because I have worked in this place, I have been trained to believe all survivors until I have any reason to doubt, do you understand? But of course, in this society naturally there are people that will only believe the woman and so maybe that is why man are not really coming out because nobody will believe them, and they can be subjected to go and look for evidence to proof they are not lying (AG 2).

6.1.6. Lack of services and resources for men

This section will analyse the participants views on available resources in order to determine if there are adequate funds and shelters for male victims. Many organisations and facilities are established to offer help and support victims of domestic abuse, this includes shelters, helplines, non-governmental agencies, advocacy groups and even governmental organisations. These organisations exist to support, protect and empower victims of domestic abuse and are considered essential to every community.

When asked if there were adequate facilities and resources to support male victims of domestic abuse, most of the participants gave very similar answers, suggesting that there were no adequate shelters and resources that specifically supported male victims in Nigeria, they claimed that there were a lot of support groups that supported domestic abuse, but they were all tailored towards women.

At the time of this research there are no shelters specific to men available in Nigeria. There is no universally compiled list of all the shelters available for victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria but as of October 2024, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance specified that there are 47 Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) in Nigeria across 22 states that provide support services to victims of sexual violence. Although numerous shelters and services for domestic abuse exist, the majority are predominantly designed to meet the needs of women.

One judicial officer believed that the main reason for the lack of shelters for men is due to the low number of reports of domestic abuse against men, although it is important to have shelters available for the few that are reported, as it would improve trust in the government and the criminal justice system:

Ummm the practicability of the solution, I know the government has provided homes for victims, female victims but I have never seen homes for men. There should be at least one in place for men, right? The number of times you will need the place is another question, but you know let them know there is a place available, you know seeing is believing. Knowing that there is a place for us that will improve their confidentiality and their trust in that system that there is actually a soft landing. Rather than when they come with a complaint with the hope that maybe they will be able to get help (JD 5).

A participant who was an advocate from the advocacy group also emphasized the need for shelters for male victims:

I think we also need maybe a safe space for men, because we have a safe space for women, if a woman comes in now and tells me she can't go back to her house, we have a space we can keep her and there are so many NGO's doing fantastic work in that aspect but nobody is thinking about the men. So, if a man comes and says he can't go back home, the best I can do is probably get an hotel for him and tell him to sleep there, so there is no shelter anywhere for men yet. So, if I am going to say any improvements, I think the men need something like that (AG 2).

The aforementioned participant is a member of an advocacy group in Nigeria overseen by the Lagos State government; this advocacy group operates a shelter for survivors of domestic violence. However, she stated that although the shelter was intended to support all for all survivors of domestic violence, it does not actually extend to male victims or survivors, highlighting the need for a shelter specifically designed for men.

As discussed in chapter 3, no support services specifically for men were identified and currently in operation. AG 1 stated that when people come to them for help wanting to leave a toxic and abusive environment, they are usually referred to a shelter. However, she stated that the shelters available in Nigeria only accommodates women and they had no reliefs for male victims still she believed this was something her organisation was working towards, providing a safe place for everyone:

To be honest I don't think so, we refer people to shelters and when I say people, I am saying women whether they have kids or not. So, a woman comes

and says this man errhh beat black and blue last night, comes in with bruises wanting to leave the toxic environment immediately, we refer to a shelter as quickly as possible. Now I keep saying if it was guy, we do not have anywhere to refer him too. So, are we saying go back to your abusive home, are we saying go and look for a friend to hang with it? What if he doesn't have anyone to stay with. What if we are his only hope. We honestly don't have enough reliefs for male survivors, and I think this is something we are personally looking into and working towards because the truth is, if we say we are here for everyone then we should make provisions for everyone (AG 1).

She went further to state that this might be a cause for the low report rate on domestic abuse against men, because men are not aware that there could be support services for them if they experience domestic abuse. She claimed there were no adequate services for men and while they encouraged men to come to them for help, they did not have the resources to cater to male victims of domestic abuse. She touched on what she thought is a preconception, that the society sees advocacy groups as a feminist group, suggesting this means that the society sees advocacy groups as a support system for just women:

Personally, I think we need to start thinking more about it. Maybe if men knew that there was something for them to actually come to, then they will come out because right now there is really not much for them to come out to. I still get asked 'can we refer a male to your agency'. I say yes please go ahead, even we the social workers are a bit squeamish about that, like can we be referring men for these things and like I said, it is not a feminist movement it is for everyone. So, what we can do is to be more male survivor centric. I know that the balance is not perfect but nevertheless we should make provisions for the few that we do get to see (AG 1).

Another participant started by saying that everybody has an opportunity to access all the services available to victims of domestic abuse:

well, yes, I think the same way there are services for women, if we find any man in that bracket, they can also access the services (AG 2).

But later on, backtracked and explained that there were no safe spaces for men, stating that the best they do is to put the man in a hotel, however this is a limited solution as this is not sustainable, she encourages a need for improvements in this sector:

I think we also need maybe a safe space for men, because we have a safe space for women, if a woman comes in now and tells me she can't go back to her house, we have a space we can keep her and there are so many NGO's doing fantastic work in that aspect but nobody is thinking about the men. So, if a man comes and says he can't go back home, the best I can do is probably get an hotel for him and tell him to sleep there, so there is no shelter anywhere for men yet. So, if I am going to say any improvements, I think the men need something like that (AG 2).

Two participants, from the judiciary and a participant from the advocacy group believed there were adequate services for all victims of domestic abuse, however the participant from the judiciary recognised that most of these services focus on women:

Yes, there are, these opportunities, whatsoever, police, medicals ummm law enforcement, legal, empowerment is open to all, in as much as it is open to women, it is also open to men as well (AG 3).

The available services are for all victims of domestic abuse and not specific to any gender. However, more NGOs tend to focus on women, but this should begin to change (JD 2).

As stated by one of the participants above, there should be at least one shelter, home or support service specifically focusing on male victims of domestic abuse, it does not matter the percentage of male victims available, it is important because it gives men the assurance that there is help, encouraging them to trust and speak up when needed:

Ummm the practicability of the solution, I know the government has provided homes for victims, female victims but I have never seen homes for men. There should be at least one in place for men, right? The number of times you will need the place is another question, but you know let them know there is a place available, you know seeing is believing. Knowing that there is a place for us that will improve their confidentiality and their trust in that system that there is actually a soft landing. Rather than when they come with a complaint with the hope that maybe they will be able to get help (JD 5).

All of the participants agreed that there were no specific support services for male victims or survivors of domestic abuse in Nigeria, although one of the participants believed it did not matter as the services for domestic abuse are open to everybody irrespective of gender. However, the data shows that the shelters available in Nigeria only admits women.

The lack of acknowledgement of male victims was a major obstruction faced during recruitment of participant from advocacy groups, many of the groups outrightly stated they did not deal with male victims and were not interested in partaking in interviews on male victims. The only advocacy group in Nigeria that dealt exclusively with male victims closed down without notice in 2020. Whilst steps were taken to find members of that group it was to no avail.

6.1.7. Intervention

This section is about what can be done to improve help seeking and also about encouraging positive masculinity. Some of the participants illustrated a need for intervention by tackling the root cause that inhibits men from seeking help. This section points out some steps adopted by some service responders to encourage men to report their experiences of domestic abuse.

Two of the participants explained that this can be done by focusing on boys and the societal expectations placed on them from a young age, these expectations hinders expressions of vulnerability, and these boys grow into men that cannot ask for help:

More awareness and also to teach our men from their youth that it is alright to show emotions (JD 1).

We really need to attack that, we need to focus on the root cause of the problem, it starts from saying 'boys shouldn't cry, they should suck it up'. I have a son and I am going to let him cry as much as he wants to if it is going to make him feel better and if it will make him a compassionate human being at the end of the day (AG 1).

AG 1 stated further that their organisation had an initiative that focused on teaching positive masculinity and encouraging boys to express their feelings, believing this will create a ripple effect that will encourage men that are experiencing domestic abuse to reach for help and creating a society that is more accepting of vulnerable men:

So, we have had a lot on interventions for religious leaders, parents, teachers. There is an initiative called the king's club where we actually teach positive

masculinity to secondary school students so that young men can know that their emotions are valid, and they don't have to be angry all the time. You can express yourself in a positive way and you can channel those emotions into something more positive. We are doing a lot of interventions to try and attack the root cause because the truth is until we live in a society where we feel it is okay for men to express themselves, men would not come out and this will always be a problem (AG 1).

There is a relationship between masculinity and education in this context. Analysing gendered expectations and masculinity constructs play a huge role in understanding male behaviour as perpetrators and victims of abuse. It represents two distinct yet connected faces of the same underlying issue.

6.1.8. Improvements

When the participants were asked on improvements that can be made in response to male victims of domestic abuse, there were mixed responses. Some participants believed there was no need for improvements, others felt improvements were not necessary until the percentage of men seeking help rises but majority of the participants believed there were lots of improvements needed to provide proper care and support to male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria.

The main improvement described by many of the participants was on awareness, calling on organisations and the community to recognise that service providers cater to man as well as women and encouraging men to report and get help when they experience domestic abuse:

The improvement that can be made is sensitization, sensitize people that if this happens to you, you are not a supernatural being you are a human being so if you fall victim, that the way there are solutions for female victims there are also solutions for male victims, sensitization is very important (JD 5).

More awareness and also to teach our men from their youth that it is alright to show emotions (JD 1).

More sensitization is required (JD 2).

The State needs to partner with religious bodies and the government at the local government level to improve the sensitisation and awareness level (JD 4).

This participant also argued for a lot more sensitization and education but went further to state the importance of further research to determine the prevalence of domestic abuse against men. Huntley et al., 2020, suggests that it enhances understanding of the specific experiences and needs of male victims:

That calls for enlightenment, education and awareness of this kind of abuse. The environment does not allow for anyone to belief just as she said, they will say you have to be man enough to fight for yourself and defend yourself. Even some mothers thought us, 'you are a man go out and fight'. As there is awareness on abuse for women victims of domestic abuse, there should be for men too, yes. There should be research done to determine the prevalence because from there we can build up (CS 1).

Another participant from the judiciary said it was important for service responders to create an atmosphere that encouraged male victims to express their feelings:

Need to create an atmosphere wherein male victims would be encouraged to express their hurt without feeling judged (JD 3).

This law enforcement participant also suggests that improvements needed to come from the government, stating that lack of jobs which leads to poverty is a stressor that contributes to domestic abuse, he thinks an improved economy will reduce domestic abuse, it is also heavily suggested by CS 2 that poverty can lead to domestic abuse, with wives verbally abusing their husbands. This aligns with Ifeanyichukwu et al., (2017), who believed that domestic abuse may occur when both or either spouse struggles to meet ends meet mostly because of the loss of a job or just the lack of finance, which often leads to short tempers, guilt, feelings of inadequacy among partners and eventually domestic abuse among partners:

To me I think the government should improve our economy and let men have good jobs, because due to our investigation it is evident that if a man does not have money and cannot take care of his home, you will have domestic violence (LE 2).

Two of the participants from the advocacy group and a judiciary officer were less concerned about specific improvements and were more focused on the low percentage of men that report experiencing domestic abuse, with one of the participants particularly stating that with little to no knowledge on the experiences of male victims of domestic abuse it is difficult to understand male victims and he therefore did not think there is a need for improvement until there is more knowledge on domestic abuse perpetrated against men:

I don't really think there is any improvement for now, at the level where we are in, we need more men to even speak out as at now, the percentage is still very low as compared to the women, so we need more men to speak out (AG 2).

The challenge I have is that little or not much can be gotten from their angle as compared to women. With women we have a variety of experiences and in a short time we can gather so much knowledge but for men, they are very few, you know? and so it takes time to really understand (JD 5).

6.2. PERCEPTIONS ON HELP SEEKING

6.2.1. Help seeking behaviour

This theme addresses the participants views and understandings on the process of help seeking and help avoidance and the conduct and behaviours of victims when they have the courage to report.

It is very difficult for male victims of abuse to report their experiences and seek help and the few that do report do not always have positive reactions from their family, friends and the community. (Hogan et al., 2021) One of the advocacy group participants raised concern on how members of society might not refer the few male victims of domestic abuse that disclose to service providers because of hegemonic masculinity and societal constructs that adheres to traditional masculinity (Rowlands, 2022). One of the participants from the advocacy group stated that it would lead to male victims of domestic abuse retreating preventing them from getting help while continuing to endure the abuse:

will a man easily be able to talk to his pastor about this and will the pastor refer him, even if he speaks to a friend will the friend refer him too because many of our clients are referred by their friends, sisters, people in church, will we see that same move when it comes to men. Will their own male counterpart

refer them to this place. It borders on societal construct. The idea that men should not be weak and if you are crying about your wife hitting you then you are a weakling (AG 1).

This participant stated further that when the men did take the courage to speak to a service responder, the majority failed to follow through. This could be as a result of the shame and embarrassment associated with male victims of domestic abuse:

we are calling men out also to say, you know what, don't be shy to ask for help, so we say men come for empowerment as well, whether it is business, you want a job, you want to learn a skill, we umm, we finally got a breakthrough for us. We finally got a guy come up to us and said he needed help with his daughter's school fees and we just paid the school fees last week. Umm I think one of the greatest challenges we have at the empowerment department is that men don't want to follow through with the procedure. So yes, we have some men being referred to us. Let us say, out of ten men being referred to us, it is only one guy that saw the process through to the end (AG 1).

As she said, it is usually underreported and based on previous explanations given, even if you put it to a man, you know? that there is help, he is not ready to talk about it. They will tell you they can handle it, they are on top of it and that they are in control (CS 1).

According to Rowlands (2022), many men that face domestic abuse struggle with their identities, feeling inadequate, emasculated and powerless which makes them blame themselves for the abuse. He stated further that all these feelings sometimes make them 'redefine their masculinity' viewing their ability to withstand abuse as a sign of strength and resilience. Men saying they can control it and are on top of it is a way to maintain their role as the strong man in spite of their victimization (ibid). This is in line with Hogan et al., (2021), where it was posited that cultural expectations of masculinity expects a man to be stoic, emotionally impassive and in control (Nam et al., 2010 and Sullivan et al., 2015), which does not align with men seeking help. Huntley et al., (2019) however believes that the way help is provided, and the type of help may influence men to consider seeking help.

6.2.2. Reluctance and barriers to help seeking

This section analyses the barriers that prevent men from seeking help after experiencing domestic abuse. The participants offer their views on the barriers to help seeking, these barriers ranged from challenges to masculinity, denial, illiteracy, ignorance and financial difficulties. Research has shown that a major barrier to help seeking is the fear that the society will perceive them as less men (Hogan, 2021).

Some of the participants believed that domestic abuse victims were reluctant to report their experiences and get help because of the societal pressure on men to maintain a socially acceptable standard of masculinity (Hogan et al., 2021). A few of the participants described barriers to help seeking that they had encountered while working as key stakeholders. Commonly, they claimed Nigeria being a patriarchal society is a major factor, men are not allowed to be vulnerable, they were embarrassed, and they feared being ostracised for not measuring up to the societal perception of what a man should be like:

The only issue that we have or that we see is that we are in a patriarchal society so we barely see men who are fine with coming out to say that they have been abused because yes ego comes in, what will people say if I say that I have been abused by a woman. One of the major issues is that men do not want to speak out as much as women do, we have a very low percentage of men who comes to say ok, I have been abused or I am facing abuse in my family. Men are like I don't want to say it so I don't get ostracised or criticised and so people don't laugh at me (AG 3).

it could be because these men rarely come out to say these things, even as much as we advocate that it is not just open for women, it is for both men and for women, but the challenge is that you will rarely see men to speak up (AG 3).

It is not common like that, the percentage is very low because men do not like to report that their wife is beating them, it is embarrassing! (LE 2).

The challenges we face, hmm is difficulty in reporting, it is very difficult for men to report that they are abused by their wife, so in many cases we have

maybe the neighbour or the children that will come and report on their behalf, so it is very difficult to report. So, for example if a neighbour comes to report that they have been witnessing cases of domestic abuse against a man, we invite the man first, we then hear from the man, then we invite the wife (LE 2).

Other participants had similar views on the barriers to help seeking, they also believed that a man not being able to express his feelings was a major barrier in addition to not wanting to be portrayed as weak:

This is an issue we actually need to pay attention to, because of how much men keep things bottled in, when they explode it can be disastrous. I know of a case where the man finally snapped and killed his wife and became a murderer because he was not able to express his pain and frustration (CS 1).

*Lack of public sensitization/ awareness
Problem of stigmatizing the man as a weakling
Family sentiments (JD 2).*

Men find it hard to come forward to express their experiences so as not to be perceived to be weak (JD 3).

This particular participant stated that the Nigeria culture also discouraged men from seeking help after experiencing domestic abuse, this is because the Nigerian culture encourages masculine stoicism, has staunch societal rules on masculine expectations and believes family matters even if it is domestic abuse should remain private (Adebayo and Iweala, 2022; Nwanna and Kunnuji, 2016).

Left to the men, I doubt they will step out on their own, looking at our culture (CS 1).

Many of the participants also reported men's egos as a barrier, stating that their crushed ego made them feel less than men:

The male ego (JD 1).

Also, domestic abuse against men can make men to feel they have failed their responsibility as a man or have their egos crushed, they have rubbished their ego as a man. They are not so willing to talk about it except for where you have really input the trust in them that look, right here, you are in safe hands, we would get help and it is not a new thing. You are not the first person this thing is happening to; you are the first man this is happening to. Yes, it is a challenge but there is a way out for you if you talk about it (JD 5).

6.2.3. Societal perceptions

Men have difficulties asking for help or being seen as a victim because of the expectations placed on them to be strong and dominant (Hines and Douglas, 2009). Arnocky & Vaillancourt (2014) asserts that many victims choose not to report experiences of domestic abuse because of the negative association with domestic abuse victims, many times male victims are blamed or dismissed when domestic abuse is reported. As explained by George (1994), male victimization is such a controversial topic, that he termed it ‘the great taboo’, he believed this controversy was a result of the societal expectation and stereotype attached to masculinity and femininity. Lysova (2020) states that there are societal expectations of a man, and digressing from this role can be damaging.

Many victims of domestic abuse practice a culture of silence so as to not bring shame to their family (Nwokocha, 2023). Several of the participants identified that the Nigerian culture discourages men from speaking up on their experiences of domestic abuse lest they will be seen as weaklings, they are expected to take charge of their homes and exhibit no weakness:

Nobody talks about it in Nigeria, the men don't talk about it, it would have really been lovely to do a prevalence study to know the exact prevalence, but men will not talk about it because culturally you will be seen as a weakling when you start talking about being abused by somebody that is seemingly a 'weaker vessel'. The society is not ready to listen to such men, they will think they are irresponsible, they are

not matured, and they are not man enough. And they will also believe that the woman has bewitched the man especially his family (CS 1).

Problem of stigmatizing the man as a weakling (JD 2).

Cultural sentiments, these victims are mostly turned back at the police stations to go and settle with their families and be in charge (JD 2).

Cultural barrier arising from the African tradition which tends to believe that the man is more superior (JD 3).

Stigmatization is a big challenge for the men since they could be perceived as weak and unable to take charge of their home (JD 4).

Very well! The Cultural and religious beliefs in the society are not helping and generally encourage the victim to endure the pain rather than speaking out. What I will call the 'Man Ego Syndrome' and the 'For Better for Worse Syndrome' (JD 4).

It is rampant but mostly not reported. A man is taught to be macho, not exhibit weakness. So a lot of men endures the abuse so as not be subjected to societal ridicule (JD 1).

The stigmatization by the society as men are subjected to ridicule for domestic abuse (JD 1).

On a general note, in Africa, divorce is often frowned at, and this is influenced by societal, cultural and religious beliefs. A major example is the experience of Osinachi who stayed in an abusive relationship until she died, even though there were several interventions attempts by her children, parents and siblings, she preferred to endure the abusive marriage for three reasons that highlights the huge influence of culture and religion on the Nigerian society. She stated that she did not want to leave her marriage; 'so people would not curse God because of her, she believed divorce was unacceptable to God and she did not want people to see her as a

woman that could not keep her marriage' (Nwokocha, 2023:51). While this example is that of a woman, this expectations cuts across men and women in Nigeria. Many prefer to stay in abusive relationships to avoid the stigmatization associated with a divorce (Nwokocha, 2023).

Societal and religious beliefs (JD 1).

It is worth noting that gendered stereotypes about women and men emerge in this data and this contributes to how domestic abuse is understood.

A major theme noticed from responses is the fear of ridicule and the stigmatization. Some of the participants also identified that the few that do report or talk about their experiences are met with disdain and disbelief by even their friends and families:

If I personally call my mom up now (he starts laughing and the remaining participants joined in, one of the participants also chimed in and said you mom will even abuse you) and tell her that my wife abuses me, my mom will verbally abuse me too, asking me if I am normal (CS 1).

CS 1 gave an example of the reinforced roles attached to boys and girls from a young age, boys are trained to not show weakness, this aligns with Adebayo and Iweala (2022), who states that boys are taught from a young age to conform to certain gender roles and most continuously prove their masculinity:

Let me give you an example, when I was growing up, my mom did not allow the girls in my family to use our bucket, the day she finds the girls using the boys bucket, the one used to take a bath, she will be very angry that in doing so you are weakening my son. That the woman is not supposed to use the bathing bucket that a man is using. That is a cultural background and all of us grew up with the belief that once a woman touches your bathing bucket that you are weak, and that is the kind of training we received at that time. We grew up with this kind of training believing that if you express your mind when you are being abused that the society and the culture will frown at that, and that is why it will be tough to identify men being abused. The female they

express their mind and their pain, but males are told big boys don't cry, we bottle everything in and that is why we die early too (CS 1).

The men themselves, the victim themselves are the major barriers. Umm of course, on the flip side, the women too can also be that barrier to them getting treatment. The other barrier is the society. In as much as female abuse is widely recognised and we are sensitized, due to stigma a lot of women are still not talking about their own abuse, now telling a man to seek a redress, injunction or to go to court is an embarrassment. So he is not willing to talk about it because even umm, I can imagine the judge, the presiding judge handling this case, because we are a product of our culture, and our culture expects that man to have the boldness, the courage the will, the tenacity, the assertiveness to be able to 'manage his home', him not being able to do that will tag him an imbecile by some people. I can imagine the face of the judge, wait except the judge is enlightened on domestic abuse against men, if the man and woman are standing before the judge, and the man is saying she has been abusing me, I can't imagine her taking the man serious. People too will not take him seriously and will start reading meaning to it, especially if she is richer. People can say that he just wants to take advantage of her wealth and that he is not really being abused and is not telling the truth (CS 1).

CS 1 posits that there needs to be more training of service responders so they can provide a safe environment for men to share their experiences while also possessing the skills to encourage men to speak up, also stating that being a male victim in Nigeria is considered a weakness. Adebayo and Iweala (2022:4) explains that in Nigeria, 'ideal masculinity is characterised by being strong, hardworking, providing resilient and invulnerable' they stated further that abused men tend to agonize in silence to avoid stigmatization which often leads to psychological issues:

The saying men are not meant to cry is harmful, if a man has depression nobody will know until it is severe, and even after identifying this he would most probably still be in denial, you get? So yeah umm a man presenting with erectile dysfunction, and you do

everything, but you know that it is most probably some psychological issues they are dealing with and the moment you mention that, you are not likely to see them again because you have pricked that raw and painful area. They don't want to talk about it because it is also going to bring up their own seemingly weakness, which is actually not a weakness. Gradually, we have to teach men that it is okay to cry, it is okay to talk about your pain if you want to, to make them feel safe. There is no special training on men as victims of domestic abuse (CS 1).

One of the judicial officer participants claimed that it is important for responders to be vigilant, he claimed that most of the domestic abuse cases reported are by women but that sometimes they are the actual perpetrators:

Mostly the women file and claim domestic violence but fact in evidence may show that the man is actually the victim. I think it is just the African society thing. The man does not want to be seen as a weakling, so he would rather go on a systematic separation or just run away totally (JD 2).

6.2.4. Religious suppression

Some of the participants believed that religious suppression was a major hinderance to help seeking. This section covers how some religious leaders try to cover abuse, spiritualizing domestic abuse as an attack, minimizing and dismissing domestic abuse victims. Nigeria is a religious country, and religious leaders are considered pillars in the society, so many Nigerians turn to their religious leaders during times of difficulty (Nwokocha, 2022). However, it is noted that some religious leaders try to cover up domestic abuse because of the stigma attached to it. Also, according to Aborisade (2023) the fear of losing respected positions in churches, communities and social gatherings hinders men from reporting experiencing domestic abuse coupled with how the society expects individuals in respected roles to have perfect marriages.

One of the advocacy group participants stated she had experienced religious leaders covering up domestic abuse issues, maybe believing that taking it up might also lead to divorce which some religious leaders' frown on:

Religious leaders trying to brainwash them and cover up the issues with scriptures, and it should not be so (AG 1).

they go to their pastor in church and their pastor is saying, 'God hates divorce', I say yes God might hate divorce, but he loves divorcees (AG 1).

Another community stakeholder participant similarly stated that the Pastor tried covering the issue and it was found out only after it had worsened, and the Pastor could not cover it up:

I found that before it escalated to this, he had tried to talk to the pastor beforehand about the abuse he had been enduring but professional intervention was not done, the pastor tried to cover it up and spiritualized it as an attack and now it has escalated, by the time the pastor realised that he could not cover it again, he could no longer spiritualize it, it was already too late (CS 1).

6.3. CONCLUSION

This chapter presented findings that addresses the main challenges faced by service providers on responding to male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria. Two main themes were identified; understanding service responses and service responders' perception on help seeking.

The main finding in this chapter is that the support for male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria is inadequate and insufficient. The responders believed there is no awareness and training on domestic abuse perpetrated against men in Nigeria. They pointed out the invisibility and lack of inclusivity of men in awareness and training programs and materials on domestic abuse in Nigeria.

Another finding is the lack of resources and materials, participants stressed the lack of shelters and advocacy groups in Nigeria that specifically focused on male victims, stating that they were mostly tailored for female victims.

Finally, the participants believed the major barriers to men seeking help are Nigeria's patriarchal and traditional society that stigmatizes male victims, further stating that this reinforced hegemonic masculinity, shame, fear, and denial. They described the poor responses from family, friends, religious leaders and sometimes even their fellow colleagues when male victims shared their experiences. These challenges not only discouraged men from seeking help from services responders but also contributed to major denial and ignorance by male victims of domestic abuse.

Most of the participants believed the best way to improve these issues is through sensitization, awareness, education and creating facilities for male victims of domestic abuse. However, some participants suggested that the percentages on reported male victims of domestic abuse were too low to require any radical change and believed there was no need for improvement.

The next chapter will be the final chapter, explaining the recommendations, limitations and conclusion of the thesis.

CHAPTER SEVEN: RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

7.0. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the contribution of the study to the academia and social society. It reviews the findings of the research, proffer recommendations, and conclude the thesis by setting out the contributions made by this research. It starts with the research's contribution to knowledge, followed by its recommendations for future research and policy, the limitations and strengths of the study, and then the final conclusion.

7.0.1. Preamble

This thesis has explored how Nigerian society responds to domestic abuse perpetrated against men. Drawing from in-depth qualitative interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders that deal with domestic abuse in Nigeria. The thesis addresses the following research questions;

1. How do key stakeholders/service responders understand and explain domestic abuse against men in Nigeria?
2. How do social-cultural factors influence the way key stakeholders/service responders' respond to domestic abuse against men in Nigeria?
3. What do the key stakeholders/service responders think are the main challenges in responding to male victims of domestic abuse?
4. What is the current legal framework for addressing domestic abuse in Nigeria and how adequate is it for addressing domestic abuse against men in Nigeria?

This thesis explored understandings of domestic abuse within some sectors of Nigerian society, including legal professionals, police, judges, tribal chiefs and support organisations. Specifically, it explored the challenges faced by key stakeholders and support services in providing help for male victims of domestic abuse, the societal perceptions that obstructs help seeking for male victims, and the applicability of the laws that regulate domestic abuse.

Thematic analysis (Braun and Clark, 2021) was adopted to analyse the data from interviews and focus groups in order to understand the nuances and diverse perspectives of key stakeholders on domestic abuse against men in Nigeria.

7.1. Overview of key findings

The thematic analysis of stakeholder interviews and focus groups reveals eight main findings;

First, with regard to research question one, the participants recognised the typical forms of domestic abuse as acknowledged in the VAPP Act like; physical, emotional, verbal, sexual and economic abuse. However, some of the religious and professional community stakeholders identified a peculiar form of abuse, which I have termed ‘spiritual abuse’ (the use of religion to control, exploit, and manipulate people), which is atypical to the forms identified in global north literature. This is a testament to Nigeria’s distinctive context on domestic abuse. The participants also recognised that the effects of domestic abuse on adult men are not always physical bruises; the majority believed it to encompass psychological abuse, with community stakeholders suggesting that this effect sometimes manifests as other illnesses because they suffer silently without seeking help.

Secondly, a key finding linked to the previous finding, is that responses provided by participants were determined by their personal and professional experiences with major influence from religion and culture. In Nigeria, culture and religion are major influences in law making and the way it is interpreted (Igwe, 2015). As described in the thesis, Nigeria is a highly religious country, and this is evidenced in the three major sources of laws in Nigeria; the common law, Islamic Law and customary law (Oba, 2011). Culture and religion are deeply intertwined in the day to day lives of every Nigerian, they are therefore majors factor in how they approach, understand and explain domestic abuse.

The third main finding relates to the various risk factors that stakeholders identified can contribute to domestic abuse against men, such as: One, power struggle between couples where irrespective of gender, domestic abuse can occur when there is a disparity of power. Two, socio-economic conditions; participants believed that poverty breeds an environment of tension, making couples in the relationship on edge. As such, it can act as a trigger for domestic abuse. Three, infidelity; participants believed cheating could be a major source of conflict in a relationship. And four, societal expectations; participants stated there are stereotypical gender roles attached to men, where they are expected to be the providers and protectors of the home and this is particularly important in Nigeria, and when men are not able to meet these expectations, it can lead to conflicts and abuse in the home. These factors depend on the individual and circumstances of each case, participants mentioned that it is important for key stakeholders and service responders to identify these risk factors.

Fourthly, participants explained that the typical response most male victims of domestic abuse receive are criticisms, insults and jests. For example, advocacy members stated that male victims are usually told to ‘man up and grow a pair’. They stated that there are cultural and traditional expectations of strength that men are supposed to live up to, not living up to this was a source of shame to men. The local chiefs similarly believed that men are expected to be an authoritative figures of a strong traditional man. Furthermore, that it would be unheard of to bring a case that challenged their masculinity before the local chiefs or king. If an extreme case was brought before them, the woman would immediately be banished from the community.

The fifth major finding was that many male victims either do not believe that they could be victims of domestic abuse or would not identify themselves as such due to the shame and stigma attached to domestic abuse against men and how the society has tagged domestic abuse as synonymous with abuse against women. This in turn is a major challenge to seeking help. The participants believed that until men acknowledge and identify they can be abused it will be difficult to provide adequate help to male victims.

There is a clear gap in Nigeria’s current response to domestic abuse, particularly in relation to support services for male victims. While services have been developed to support women and girls experiencing gender-based violence, including shelters, helplines, legal support, and awareness programmes, there are still very few to non-existent equivalent services that specifically recognise and respond to male victims in Nigeria. This imbalance reflects the social understandings of domestic abuse, where women are more readily recognised as victims and men are often overlooked. The lack of accessible and gender-inclusive support services creates further barriers for men experiencing domestic abuse. As the participants mentioned, stigma, expectations around masculinity, and fear of not being believed can stop men from disclosing abuse or seeking help. Responses to domestic abuse in Nigeria therefore need to move beyond a solely gendered understanding of victimisation and recognise that, although women remain disproportionately affected by domestic abuse, men can also experience abuse and require appropriate support.

A sixth finding was the difficulty that male victims encounter when seeking and receiving help; it was found that there is a rigorous burden on men to prove that they had been victims of domestic abuse, as they are not naturally believed. It was also suggested that there is a lack

of training of service providers on identifying male victims of domestic abuse which was highlighted as a major challenge in helping and identifying male victims of domestic abuse. There is also an absence of suitable male representation in publishing materials and invisibility in response services, making it difficult for male victims to identify with the support services. The participants further suggested that there were no adequate shelters and resources that specifically supported male victims in Nigeria, they claimed that there were a lot of support groups that supported victims of domestic abuse, but they were all tailored towards women. It was also found that male victims are often viewed as being responsible for their victimization and their experiences seen as less serious in comparison to female victims of abuse.

These findings suggest the need for more inclusive domestic abuse services in Nigeria. This includes developing adequate support pathways for male victims, training service providers to respond to different experiences of abuse, improving data collection on male victimisation, and ensuring that laws, policies and services acknowledge men as potential victims without weakening the focus on women's experiences.

The seventh finding is that, whilst some participants believed improvements in the approach to domestic abuse against men were not necessary until the percentage of men seeking help rises, the majority believed there were lots of improvements needed to provide proper care and support to male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria. The major improvement was awareness and sensitization of the community on domestic abuse against men and the need for the creation of support services specifically for male victims.

These findings also demonstrates the importance of understanding masculinity within the Nigerian socio-cultural context. Masculinity is shaped by cultural, religious, historical and social factors, the implication of which mean that the expectations placed on men varies across societies. In Nigeria, there are expectations of men to be providers and protectors which can influence how domestic abuse against men is understood and responded to. These expectations contributes to the perception that men cannot be victims of abuse and may create barriers to disclosure and help-seeking. However, this study also highlights the need to avoid viewing Nigerian masculinity only through narratives of dominance or violence. Masculinities in Nigeria are diverse and continuously negotiated, shaped by community, family responsibilities and changing social realities. Therefore, responses to domestic abuse should consider the specific cultural context in which men experience and understand abuse,

while also challenging harmful expectations that prevent male victims from seeking help and support.

Finally, participants from the judiciary and law enforcement believed the law on domestic abuse in Nigeria to be adequate, and that its gender- neutrality allows for protection of male victims. They said that they approached cases involving male and female victims the same way (although their views in relation to other questions suggested otherwise). Taking a different view, community stakeholders and advocacy group members believed that while the law is gender neutral, in practice it does not consider the nuances and differences in handling male and female victims of domestic abuse, they believed that they had to be gentler and more sensitive when approaching male victims of domestic abuse to help men feel safe discussing an issue that is often considered a taboo. It was found that approaching male and female victims the same way neglects the special needs of each victim, as treating people the same does not mean they are treated equally. Treating people the same does not recognise that they have different start points, needs and gendered contexts.

7.2. Contribution to Knowledge

The study has highlighted how some elements of Nigerian society responded to domestic abuse in Nigeria. The study focused on the perspectives of key stakeholders and support services that deal with domestic abuse in Nigeria. It adds to existing research that centers on male victims of domestic abuse. It explores a topic that is rarely concentrated on, providing awareness of domestic abuse against men, recommendations on help-seeking and policy and law amendments to protect male victims of domestic abuse.

There is a lack of research on male victims of domestic abuse relative to female victims especially in Nigeria. Many of the literature and research available are western focused consequently the main aim of this research was to understand men's experiences of domestic abuse in Nigeria from the viewpoints of key stakeholders/ service responders by determining the Nigerian explanation of domestic abuse and considering how the law and society responds to domestic abuse against men in Nigeria considering social-cultural and religious factors. The purpose is to examine how societal attitudes and perceptions towards domestic abuse influence how domestic abuse is understood and responded to in Nigeria. This was done by addressing the Nigerian explanation of domestic abuse, the challenges faced by key stakeholders and support services in providing help for male victims of domestic abuse, the societal perceptions that obstructs help seeking for male victims and the applicability of the

laws that regulates domestic abuse in Nigeria. Therefore, the thesis achieved its aims and objectives.

The original contribution of this thesis to knowledge is that it highlights the societal expectations on men in Nigeria. Focusing on a form of societal expectation known as hegemonic masculinity that imposes how a ‘real man’ is supposed to be. These expectations are influenced by the culture and religion in Nigeria. It also points to the lack of acknowledgement and insufficient services for male victims by key stakeholders/ service responders in Nigeria. Furthermore, it indicated a need for gender equality in the accessibility and provision of support in help seeking for male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria. This thesis adds to existing research that found a lack of support services for male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria, with many of the service responders available responding that they only helped women and the shame and stigmatisation that is attached to being a male victim of domestic abuse in Nigeria (Ayodele, 2017; Adetoro and Adetoro, 2020; Adebayo, 2014; and Obarisiagbon and Oimage, 2019).

Findings from this research also support previous international researchers that are key contributors advocating for male victims of domestic abuse like Hines, D. A. and Malley-Morrison K. (2001); Huntley et al., (2019); Bates et al., (2023); Walklate et al., (2022); Tshoane et al., (2024) and Hogan et al., (2022).

The shame and embarrassment of not meeting the patriarchal standard of masculinity and the difficulty in finding support services are important factors in understanding the unique ways men experience domestic abuse and the responses they receive when seeking help. Understanding this helps support services in helping male victims of domestic abuse.

While, the data collection was conducted in Lagos Nigeria, the findings are applicable to Nigeria more widely, and the findings can potentially be applied to other African countries, due to their similar reliance on a culture that upholds a patriarchal standard of masculinity that belief that men cannot be abused by women in Africa, that shames and stigmatizes male victims of domestic abuse, and their shared lack of adequate support services for male victims of domestic abuse (Tshoane et al., 2024). Although, it can be argued that almost all countries uphold a certain societal expectation of masculinity (Hogan et al., 2021), the difference between the western countries and Africa is the readiness of the west to discuss male victims of domestic abuse and the availability and accessibility of support services specifically for male victims of domestic abuse in western countries. The African society

promotes patriarchy and rarely believes in the victimisation of men, therefore there is a very limited focus and recognition of men as possible victims of domestic abuse.

One of the findings from this research is that the responses provided by the participants were heavily influenced by religion and culture, recognising it is a major factor in how they approach, understand and explain domestic abuse.

The study further acknowledged that the support for male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria is inadequate and inefficient, the research found that the major barriers to men seeking help is Nigeria's patriarchal and traditional society that stigmatized male victims, further stating that this promoted toxic masculinity, shame, fear, and denial. They described the poor responses from family, friends, religious leaders and sometimes even their fellow colleagues when male victims shared their experiences. These challenges not only discouraged men from seeking help from services responders but also contributed to major denial and ignorance by male victims of domestic abuse.

Finally, it found that the legislations and policies in Nigeria that protect against domestic abuse are couched in a gender-neutral way. The majority of the judiciary and law enforcement officers did not have a problem with the adequacy and application of the current laws on domestic abuse against men. The advocacy groups and community stakeholders/ local chiefs however had a diverse view on the available laws; some of the participants acknowledged the existence and adequacy of the current laws on domestic abuse in Nigeria, recognising its neutral tone which covered everybody, while others questioned the adequacy of the laws, stating that there should be laws and policies that specifically catered to male victims of domestic abuse as there were several for women. It is the view of the researcher that policies that identify men as possible victims of domestic abuse should be enacted and gender-neutral approach in law dismisses gendered dynamics and the specific needs of the victims. The Nigerian government has a responsibility to draft and enforce appropriate laws and support victims of domestic violence.

Study participants stressed the lack of shelters and advocacy groups in Nigeria that specifically focused on male victims, stating that they were mostly tailored for female victims. The participants also suggested that there are several factors that can contribute to domestic abuse against men; power struggle between couples, socio-economic conditions, infidelity and societal expectations, these factors depend on the individual and circumstances

of each case, they mentioned that it is important for key stakeholders and service responders to identify this risk factors and provide psychological support for all victims.

7.3. Recommendations

This section is divided into three; recommendations to key stakeholders/ service responders, recommendations for policies and laws and recommendations for future research.

7.3.1. Recommendations to key stakeholders/ service responders

1. Changing the mindset and the cultural attitudes of the general Nigerian population is important because changing policies and laws will have no effect if mindsets remain the same. The attitude of the society should change from trivializing domestic abuse to taking it more seriously. It takes a lot of courage for men to acknowledge and speak up that they are being abused in Nigeria. They do not deserve to be ridiculed, mocked or ignored (Obarisiagbon and Oimage, 2019). Many participants claimed that domestic abuse against men is seen as a myth in the Nigerian society with many people equating general domestic abuse with only physical abuse, they suggested that the most prevalent domestic abuse experienced by male victims is emotional and verbal abuse. Therefore, government agencies and religious bodies should conduct more education and awareness campaigns to the general Nigerian population to enlighten the society about the existence and reality of domestic violence against men. This education should be undertaken by approved government agencies, religious organizations and the civil societies.
2. Key stakeholders and service responders need to be trained to recognise and validate men's distinctive experiences of domestic abuse; this is vital to understand how best to help male victims of domestic abuse. Training the professionals that deal with domestic abuse on domestic abuse perpetrated against men is vital because it plays a key role in recognising the signs of domestic abuse in men and also addressing their needs and aiding the victims. From this study it is evident that service responders and law enforcement officers are not equipped or properly trained to deal with reports on domestic abuse against men.
3. Establishing support services that purposely supports male victims of abuse. Creating a safe space that will enable men of diverse socio-demographic groups to share their experiences. In contrast to Nigeria, the United Kingdom can be seen to have taken

major steps to recognise that men can be victims of domestic abuse, a definitive example is the availability of dedicated services such as the Men's Advice Line, Abused Men in Scotland, and the Mankind Initiative; these are three confidential helplines just for male victims of domestic abuse

4. The Nigerian society is deeply patriarchal, upholding a revered view of masculinity hence, many male victims do not realise when that they are being abused or have been abused. It is therefore recommended that education on help seeking, and domestic abuse should be taught to boys from a young age in school.

7.3.2. Recommendations for policies and laws

1. Establishing policies that identify men as possible victims of domestic abuse should be enacted. Inclusive legislation and policy framework should be promoted. Adopting a 'gender-neutral' approach in law, policy or practice which dismisses gendered dynamics is therefore unhelpful.
2. Expanding the limitations of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015 (VAPP Act), Section 47 of the Act limits the scope of its applicability to the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. It is recommended that the VAPP Act should be ratified in every state in Nigeria, expanding its scope to the High Court of every state instead of just the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory.
3. The Laws in Nigeria does not specifically recognise coercive control, there should be a section in the VAPP Act that protects against coercive control against men and women.

7.3.3. Recommendations for future research

1. Future research should concentrate on the prevalence of domestic abuse against men in Nigeria and explore the statistics on the extent of the crime in Nigeria.
2. Future research should recognise the gender-specific needs of men as domestic abuse victims as domestic abuse is protected in gender neutral ways in law and policy.
3. Future research can also focus on ways in which patriarchal structures and cultures impact individuals, including domestic abuse in male same sex relationships.
4. Future research should focus on getting the perspectives of male victims themselves on their experience on how the society responds to domestic abuse perpetrated against them and the negative help-seeking experiences from the victims themselves.

5. Future research focus should concentrate on how male victims should overcome the stigmatisation that prevents them from acknowledging their victimization in the domestic abuse context as a means of addressing the problem. (Ayodele, 2017).

7.4. Limitations of the Study

There are five limitations of the study and these are addressed below, and they are as follows; Firstly, a significant number of study participants from the advocacy groups are from governmental advocacy organisations. I encountered active resistance when discussing this project with many of the non-governmental organisations as they refused involvement in research on male victims. This has implications on the generalisability on the perspectives of all advocacy groups. However, these responses still made valuable contributions to this research as they provided an insight into the responses of non-governmental or private advocacy groups to male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria.

Secondly, due to the illegality of same sex relationship in Nigeria and also because my interview and focus group discussions were with policy/ law enforcers, judiciary and traditional community members that frowned at same sex relationships, it was impossible to get their perspectives on abuse experienced by male victims by their male partners. Therefore, the scope of the research is limited to male victims of domestic abuse perpetrated by female intimate partners.

Thirdly, the sample size is not very large, which means that the range of use of the findings is limited. This is partly due to time constraints, lack of cooperation by some participants, the family support unit in the Police department were unwilling to provide more than two police officers for the interview. I recommend a larger sample size for future studies on the subject.

Fourthly, the inability to ascertain the help-seeking experiences from the male victims themselves, the responses were from the key stakeholders, and they cannot give the direct insights into the experiences of the victims. There is also the risk of the participants giving me answers they thought I might have wanted to hear and might not be a precise representation of the perspectives of the stakeholders on domestic abuse.

Finally, the study is not representative of the entire Nigeria population, study participants were recruited from Lagos, Nigeria. This is as a result of the number of service responders located in Lagos State and cannot therefore be generalized to the entire country.

However, regardless of these limitations, the study was able to achieve its aim, and the findings can be used to develop effective strategies to address responses to domestic abuse in Nigeria. It offered insight into the responses experienced by male victims of domestic abuse and provided suggestions on how providing adequate service responses to male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria.

7.5. Final Conclusion

This research sought to explore the response to domestic abuse against men in Nigeria. For many years men have not told their stories because they feared they would not be believed or that they would somehow be blamed for the abuse.

This thesis found domestic abuse against men is overlooked in Nigeria, this study concurs with earlier studies that recognises men in Nigeria are also exposed to domestic abuse. It established that male victims of domestic did not have support services available for them in Nigeria. Some participants of the study believed men deserve the same support and recognition and services as female victims. It further recognised shame and stigmatization about disclosing as a major barrier to help seeking by male victims of domestic abuse. Finally, the research found that the gender neutrality of the laws and policies protecting against domestic abuse dismisses the nuances and dynamic of domestic abuse against men, thereby minimizing its adequacy.

The thesis strongly recommends the reformation of the policies and stereotypical expectation of men that stigmatise male victims of domestic abuse and the establishment of support services that protect male victims of domestic abuse. It also recommends that key stakeholders in Nigeria should make deliberate efforts to acknowledge and accommodate male victims of domestic abuse and the sensitization of the society on the support services available to male victims of domestic abuse.

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APPENDIX ONE i: Consent Form for Interviews



College of Social
Sciences

Consent Form

Title of Project: Societal Response to Male Victims of Domestic Abuse in Nigeria

Name of Researcher: Oluwatofunmi Oreoluwa Tayo

Supervisors: Professor Michele Burman and Dr Oona Brooks-Hay

I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that:

- ♦ My participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
- ♦ I acknowledge that participants names will not be required for this research.
- ♦ All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.
- ♦ The material will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research
- ♦ The material may be used in future publications, both print and online.
- ♦ I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.
- ♦ Other authenticated researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

I acknowledge the provision of a Privacy Notice in relation to this research project.

PLEASE TICK ONE

1. I consent to interviews being audio-recorded ☐
2. I do not consent to interviews being audio-recorded ☐

CONSENT CLAUSE (PLEASE TICK ONE)

I agree to take part in this research study ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study ☐

Name of Participant:

Signature:

Date:

Name of Researcher: Oluwatofunmi tayo

Signature:

Date: 06/10/2022

APPENDIX ONE ii: Consent Form for Focus Group Discussions



College of Social
Sciences

Consent Form

Title of Project: Societal Response to Male Victims of Domestic Abuse in Nigeria

Name of Researcher: Oluwatofunmi Oreoluwa Tayo

Supervisors: Professor Michele Burman and Dr Oona Brooks-Hay

I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that:

- ♦ My participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
- ♦ I acknowledge that participants names will not be required for this research.
- ♦ All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.
- ♦ The material will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research
- ♦ The material may be used in future publications, both print and online.
- ♦ I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.
- ♦ Other authenticated researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

I acknowledge the provision of a Privacy Notice in relation to this research project.

PLEASE TICK ONE

3. I consent to Focus Group Discussions being audio-recorded ☐
4. I do not consent to Focus Group Discussions being audio-recorded ☐

CONSENT CLAUSE (PLEASE TICK ONE)

I agree to take part in this research study ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study ☐

Name of Participant:

Signature:

Date:

Name of Researcher: Oluwatofunmi tayo

Signature:

Date: 06/10/2022

APPENDIX TWO i: Participant Information sheet (Focus Group Discussion)



Participant Information Sheet

Study title and Researcher Details.

Researcher: Oluwatofunmi Oreoluwa Tayo

Title: Societal Response to Male victims of Domestic Abuse in Nigeria

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take some time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

Introduction

1. About the study

The purpose of this research is to develop academic and social understanding of responses to male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria and to determine the adequacy of the available policies and legislation addressing male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria. You are being asked to participate in this research because you are a key stakeholder involved in matters involving domestic abuse in Nigeria.

2. What does participation involve?

Participation in this research will involve a 60- 90-minute focus group discussion. The focus group discussion can take place at the palace premises, at a time and date most convenient to the participants.

All focus group discussions will also be audio recorded for transcription.

The focus group discussion will consist of questions on your roles and responsibilities, your understanding of domestic abuse against men and some of the challenges faced while working on issues concerning domestic abuse in Nigeria.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Participants will not be asked to discuss any personal experiences of domestic abuse.

Participants have a right to withdraw at any time without prejudice and without providing a reason. Data provided before withdrawing will be immediately deleted, should any participant choose to withdraw.

3. What will happen to your answers?

Participants are kept anonymous with only job roles, gender and organisation type required; however it might be difficult to keep the focus group discussion participants completely confidential and unknown. Therefore, pseudonyms will be used instead of names, broad categories of the roles of the participants will be used and participants would also be asked if they have a preference for how they would like to be referred to. Participants in focus group discussions will be able to identify one another but strict confidentiality will be adhered so no one outside of the participants in the focus group will be able to identify you.

Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

The information collected will be used for my PhD thesis at the University of Glasgow. The findings of this research may also be published in other forms such as articles in academic journals, conference papers, or a chapter in books. Any identifying details will not be used in any of these publications.

Some of the words you say may be used in my PhD thesis and subsequent publications. I am not able to offer a full guarantee of anonymity because other people reading the thesis may be able to identify you from the experiences and opinions you share, the language that you use (i.e., particular phrases) or if you discuss your participation in the research with other people. However, such identification is highly unlikely as I will do my utmost to ensure that you remain anonymous by using pseudonyms instead of names; using broad categories of roles (e.g., lawyer) and broad types of organisations (e.g., criminal justice; NGO); and removing any identifying details from your responses or examples you give. I hope that these measures will encourage you to speak freely and express your views.

The Data (that is, the anonymised focus group discussion transcripts) will be stored in the University of Glasgow secure storage provision OneDrive and will be archived in the University of Glasgow institutional data repository for a minimum of ten years. Authenticated users can request access to the data for use in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs.

4. Next steps

If you are interested in participating, please respond to this email (XXXXXXXXX@student.gla.ac.uk) and I will then arrange a time and date that suits you. Emailing in no way commits you to participate; you are free to withdraw at any time. You will be asked to sign a consent form so that we know you agree to take part, although you can change your mind at any point.

5. Further questions?

If you have any questions or concerns about any aspects of this research, you can contact me at XXXXXXXXX@[student.gla.ac.uk](mailto:XXXXXXXXX@student.gla.ac.uk)

If you would like to contact research supervisors regarding the conduct of this research, you can contact supervisors at Michele.Burman@glasgow.ac.uk and Oona.Brooks@glasgow.ac.uk

This project has been considered and approved by the College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow

To pursue any complaint about the conduct of the research: contact the College of Social Sciences Lead for Ethical Review, Dr Susan Batchelor: email socsci-ethics-lead@glasgow.ac.uk

End of Participant Information Sheet

LIST OF SUPPORT GROUPS FOR PARTICIPANTS

Please find the links and phone numbers of domestic abuse helplines, also attached is a link to health care centers trained to respond to domestic abuse cases in Nigeria.

1. [WACOL \(Womens Aid Collective\) Hotline](#)
Phone: +234 090 6000 2128
2. [Women's Safe House 24 HOUR CRISIS HOTLINE](#)
Phone: +234 811 266 3348
3. [Federal Government of Nigeria Toll Free Number for Violation of Girls and Women](#)
Phone: +234 800 72 73 2255
4. [Project Alert](#)
Phone: +234 1 820 9387
5. [\(DSVRT\) domestic and sexual violence response team hotline \(Lagos state\)](#)
Phone: +234 800 033 3333
6. [Mens DV Hotline](#)
Phone: +234 802 888 28282
7. [Health Centre](#) (domestic and sexual violence medical response services).

APPENDIX TWO ii: Participant Information sheet (Interviews)



College of Social
Sciences

Participant Information Sheet

Study title and Researcher Details.

Researcher: Oluwatofunmi Oreoluwa Tayo

Title: Societal Response to Male victims of Domestic Abuse in Nigeria

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take some time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

Introduction

2. About the study

The purpose of this research is to develop academic and social understanding of responses to male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria and to determine the adequacy of the available policies and legislation addressing male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria. You are being asked to participate in this research because you are a key stakeholder involved in matters involving domestic abuse in Nigeria.

6. What does participation involve?

Participation in this research will involve a 60- 90-minute interview. The interview can take place in person or online, at a time and date most convenient to the participant.

All interviews will also be audio recorded for transcription.

The interview will consist of questions on your roles and responsibilities, your understanding of domestic abuse against men and some of the challenges faced while working on issues concerning domestic abuse in Nigeria.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Participants will not be asked to discuss any personal experiences of domestic abuse.

Participants have a right to withdraw at any time without prejudice and without providing a reason. Data provided before withdrawing will be immediately deleted, should any participant choose to withdraw.

7. What will happen to your answers?

Participants are kept anonymous with only job roles, gender and organisation type required; however it might be difficult to keep the interview participants completely confidential and unknown. Therefore, pseudonyms will be used instead of names, broad categories of the roles of the participants will be used and participants would also be asked if they have a preference for how they would like to be referred to.

Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

The information collected will be used for my PhD thesis at the University of Glasgow. The findings of this research may also be published in other forms such as articles in academic journals, conference papers, or a chapter in books. Any identifying details will not be used in any of these publications.

Some of the words you say may be used in my PhD thesis and subsequent publications. I am not able to offer a full guarantee of anonymity because other people reading the thesis may be able to identify you from the experiences and opinions you share, the language that you use (i.e., particular phrases) or if you discuss your participation in the research with other people. However, such identification is highly unlikely as I will do my utmost to ensure that you remain anonymous by using pseudonyms instead of names; using broad categories of roles (e.g., lawyer) and broad types of organisations (e.g., criminal justice; NGO); and removing any identifying details from your responses or examples you give. I hope that these measures will encourage you to speak freely and express your views.

The Data (that is, the anonymised interview transcripts) will be stored in the University of Glasgow secure storage provision OneDrive and will be archived in the University of Glasgow institutional data repository for a minimum of ten years. Authenticated users can request access to the data for use in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs.

8. Next steps

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9. Further questions?

If you have any questions or concerns about any aspects of this research, you can contact me at XXXXXXXXX@student.gla.ac.uk

If you would like to contact research supervisors regarding the conduct of this research, you can contact supervisors at Michele.Burman@glasgow.ac.uk and Oona.Brooks@glasgow.ac.uk

This project has been considered and approved by the College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow

To pursue any complaint about the conduct of the research: contact the College of Social Sciences Lead for Ethical Review, Dr Susan Batchelor: email socsci-ethics-lead@glasgow.ac.uk

End of Participant Information Sheet _____

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Phone: +234 090 6000 2128
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10. [Federal Government of Nigeria Toll Free Number for Violation of Girls and Women](#)
Phone: +234 800 72 73 2255
11. [Project Alert](#)
Phone: +234 1 820 9387
12. [\(DSVRT\) domestic and sexual violence response team hotline \(Lagos state\)](#)
Phone: +234 800 033 3333
13. [Mens DV Hotline](#)
Phone: +234 802 888 28282
14. [Health Centre](#) (domestic and sexual violence medical response services).

APPENDIX THREE: Privacy Notice

PRIVACY NOTICE

Privacy Notice for Participation in Research Project:

Title of Project: Societal Response to Male Victims of Domestic Abuse in Nigeria
Name of Researcher: Oluwatofunmi Oreoluwa Tayo

Your Personal Data

The University of Glasgow will be what is known as the 'Data Controller' of your personal data processed in relation to your participation in the research project 'Societal Response to Male Victims of Domestic Abuse in Nigeria'. This privacy notice will explain how The University of Glasgow will process your personal data.

Why we need it

We are collecting basic personal data such as your name and contact details in order to conduct our research. We need your name and contact details to arrange interviews.

We only collect data that we need for the research project and your personal information will not be collected, the only information collected is the job title of participants.

Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies. (Please see accompanying **Participant Information Sheet**).

Legal basis for processing your data

We must have a legal basis for processing all personal data. As this processing is for Academic Research, we will be relying upon **Task in the Public Interest** in order to process the basic personal data that you provide. For any special categories data collected we will be processing this on the basis that it is **necessary for archiving purposes, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes**

Alongside this, in order to fulfil our ethical obligations, we will ask for your **Consent** to take part in the study Please see accompanying **Consent Form**.

What we do with it and who we share it with

All the personal data you submit is processed by the Researcher. In addition, security measures are in place to ensure that your personal data remains safe in the University provided secure storage, OneDrive.

Please consult the **Consent form** and **Participant Information Sheet** which accompanies this notice.

Due to the nature of this research, it is very likely that other researchers may find the data collected to be useful in answering future research questions. We will ask for your explicit consent for your data to be shared in this way.

A copy of the study findings and details of any subsequent publications can be provided upon request.

What are your rights?

GDPR provides that individuals have certain rights including: to request access to, copies of and rectification or erasure of personal data and to object to processing. In addition, data subjects may also have the right to restrict the processing of the personal data and to data portability. You can request access to the information we process about you at any time.

If at any point you believe that the information, we process relating to you is incorrect, you can request to see this information and may in some instances request to have it restricted, corrected, or erased. You may also have the right to object to the processing of data and the right to data portability.

Please note that as we are processing your personal data for research purposes, the ability to exercise these rights may vary as there are potentially applicable research exemptions under the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information on these exemptions, please see [UofG Research with personal and special categories of data](#).

If you wish to exercise any of these rights, please submit your request via the [webform](#) or contact dp@glg.ac.uk

Complaints

If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data, you can contact the University Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter.

Our Data Protection Officer can be contacted at dataprotectionofficer@glasgow.ac.uk

If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are not processing your personal data in accordance with the law, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) <https://ico.org.uk/>

Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee or relevant School Ethics Forum in the College.

How long do we keep it for?

Your **research** data will be retained for a period of ten years in line with the University of Glasgow Guidelines. Specific details in relation to research data storage are provided on the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form which accompany this notice.

End of Privacy Notice _____

APPENDIX FOUR: Research Furth Field Work Risk Assessment



University
of Glasgow

College of Social
Sciences

Field Work Risk Assessment

Many research students will spend periods conducting fieldwork, often in places far from Glasgow and often in remote locations far from conventional academic facilities. Ideally, such fieldwork should not be conducted alone, but it is recognised that lone fieldwork will on occasion be unavoidable. Sometimes such fieldwork will be conducted from a base in another institution, in which case the regulations in Section 2 of the University [Research Furth Regulations](#) also apply.

A formal risk assessment must be undertaken, and the risk assessment form completed by the student, and approved by the supervisor(s) before being submitted to the Graduate School for noting. Where appropriate, reference should be made to the CVCP Code of Practice for Safety in Fieldwork, to the University Code of Practice for Fieldwork and to relevant professional guidelines.

Student Details

Student Name: Oluwatofunmi Oreoluwa Tayo

Student ID: XXXXXXXX

Tier 4 Visa Holder: Yes ☒ No ☐

Tier 4 Visa expiry date: 31-12-2024

Registration Status: Full Time ☒ Part Time ☐

Principal Supervisor: Professor Michele Burman

Second Supervisor(s): Dr Oona Brooks-Hay

Please complete the following:

(a) Identify precisely the field area and/or field sites;

Field work involves travelling to my home country Nigeria. The participants of the research are professionals and face to face interviews will either be held in their offices

or in a public place or online. However, some additional safety measures will be adopted since it is a lone work; the University of Glasgow SafeZone App will be downloaded and checking in with my supervisors or my parents before and after every lone interview will be arranged.

(b) Identify the likely field conditions (i.e. climate, topography, remoteness, political sensitivities);

The research will be taken place in Lagos State, Nigeria, located in the Western part of Nigeria. It is the largest city in Nigeria and was the former capital of Nigeria. Lagos has a tropical wet and dry climate. The topography of Lagos is generally low-lying, flat in most parts with several points at sea level, dominated by its system of islands, sandbars, and lagoons.

(c) Establish what resources (i.e. shelter, clothing, provisions, safety equipment) will be required to cope with these conditions;

As Nigeria is my home country, I will be living at home when I go to Nigeria for my research. Nigeria is a warm country, so no exceptional clothing will be required. There will also be no need for special safety equipment or provisions either.

(d) Establish what safety procedures (e.g. to do with moving across rough terrain, avoiding fatigue, keeping warm) will be required to cope with these conditions;

I will be driving myself around when I get to Nigeria, I have a valid driver's license and a car to move around in Nigeria. I am also familiar with the environment and so would be able to cope with most conditions that might crop up. But I will inform my parents or supervisors before and after any meeting.

(e) Identify any persons who can provide local advice on safety matters;

My parents and family are available to provide local advice on any other safety matters.

(f) Confirm that all possible training for fieldwork has been identified and completed prior to the entering the field. Where specialist training is required which goes beyond generic training in the Graduate School and School/Research Institute courses, arrangements should be made by the supervisor(s) to ensure that such training is provided;

All possible training required for fieldwork has been completed prior to entering the field.

(g) Confirm that the research student is trained in all appropriate first aid and emergency procedures. Again, if the generic training on offer is insufficient, arrangements should be made by the supervisor(s) to ensure that such training is provided;

Training in first aid and emergency procedures has also been completed.

(h) Specifically, definite procedures should be established in advance whereby the research student can report a fieldwork problem to his/her supervisor(s) as swiftly as possible.

In the case of any fieldwork problem, I will contact my supervisors immediately by email.

Signatures

Student name: Oluwatofunmi Oreoluwa

Tayo Student signature:

Date: 21/09/2022

Supervisor Name: Michele Burman

Supervisor Signature:

Date: 22.09.2022

APPENDIX FIVE: Approved Ethics Application



College of Social
Sciences

16 September 2022

Dear Oluwatofunmi Oreoluwa Tayo

College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Project Title: Societal Response to male victims of domestic abuse in Nigeria

Application No: [400220024](#)

The College Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your application and has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. It is happy therefore to approve the project, subject to the following conditions:

- Start date of ethical approval: 19/09/2022
- Project end date: 01/09/2024
- Any outstanding permissions needed from third parties in order to recruit research participants or to access facilities or venues for research purposes must be obtained in writing and submitted to the CoSS Research Ethics Administrator before research commences: socsci-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk
- The research should be carried out only on the sites, and/or with the groups and using the methods defined in the application.
- The data should be held securely for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project, or for longer if specified by the research funder or sponsor, in accordance with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research: (https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_490311_en.pdf)
- Any proposed changes in the protocol should be submitted for reassessment as an amendment to the original application. The **Request for Amendments to an Approved Application** form should be used: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/staffandpostgraduateresearchstudents/>

Yours sincerely,

Dr Susan A. Batchelor
College Ethics Lead

APPENDIX SIX i: General Interview and focus group discussion questions

General Interview Questions

Roles and responsibilities

- What are your roles and responsibilities and how are these linked to Domestic Abuse?
- How long have you worked in this sector?
- What motivated you to work in this field or to take this job?
- Please can you talk me through a day in your life at work?

Conceptualizing domestic abuse

- How would you define Domestic Abuse?
- What are the forms of Domestic Abuse that you are aware of?
- In your view, what do you think are the key causes of domestic abuse?
- What is your understanding of domestic abuse against men?

Understanding domestic abuse against men

- How frequently do you have cases of domestic abuse against men?
- What is your experience with dealing with domestic abuse against men?
- How often does it happen to men and how often are they reported?
- How are cases concerning male domestic abuse responded to by your colleagues?
- Are they dealt with differently than with women?
- What do you think are the causes of domestic abuse against men?
- Do you have training that highlights on men as possible victims of domestic abuse?

Challenges

- What do you think are the challenges with focusing on men as victims of domestic abuse?
- Do you think there are adequate services for male victims of domestic abuse?
- Are there any barriers to the protection of male victims of domestic abuse?
- What improvements do you think can be made in response to male victims of domestic abuse?

APPENDIX SIX ii: Interview Questions for Law Enforcement officers and participants from the Judiciary

Roles and responsibilities

- What are your roles and responsibilities and how are these linked to Domestic Abuse?
- How long have you worked in this sector?
- What motivated you to work in this field or to take this job?
- Please can you talk me through a day in your life at work?

Conceptualizing domestic abuse

- How would you define Domestic Abuse?
- What are the forms of Domestic Abuse that you are aware of?
- In your view, what do you think are the key causes of domestic abuse?
- What is your understanding of domestic abuse against men?

Understanding domestic abuse against men

- How frequently do you have cases of domestic abuse against men?
- What is your experience with dealing with domestic abuse against men?
- How often does it happen to men and how often are they reported?
- How are cases concerning male domestic abuse responded to by your colleagues?
- Are they dealt with differently than with women?
- What do you think are the causes of domestic abuse against men?
- Do you have training that highlights on men as possible victims of domestic abuse?
- What particular laws guides your department on domestic abuse? and is it appropriate or adequate?
- How adequate are the current legislation and policies on addressing domestic abuse against men in Nigeria?

Challenges

- What do you think are the challenges with focusing on men as victims of domestic abuse?
- Do you think there are adequate services for male victims of domestic abuse?
- Are there any barriers to the protection of male victims of domestic abuse?

What improvements do you think can be made in response to male victims of domestic abuse?

APPENDIX SEVEN: NVivo codebook

TABLE 3: NVivo CODEBOOK

Name	Description	Files	References
(RQ 1) Understandings of Domestic abuse against men	How do service responders understand and explain domestic abuse against men in Nigeria?	13	62
Definition	how they describe domestic abuse	12	15
Examples	Stakeholders' examples of experiences of domestic abuse against men	4	11
Forms of domestic abuse	physical, economic/financial, psychological/verbal and sexual.	8	19
Impacts	Interviews with the participants suggests that depression, suicidal thoughts, shame, alienation, anxiety and lack of self-confidence/ low self-esteem are the major impacts of experiencing domestic abuse. (Perception of the impact of the abusive experience, and how it affected their disclosure and help-seeking practices).	3	7
Impacts on children	A lot of the discussions touched on the impacts on children	3	3
Knowledge on domestic abuse against women	Nuances on women as victims of abuse e.g the view of women as victims	3	4
Recognition and Knowledge of male domestic abuse	how people are unaware of male victims of domestic abuse, this includes the victims themselves and the society as a whole e.g., ignorance, Sensitization	3	3
(RQ 1,2) Explanations for male domestic abuse	How do service responders understand and explain domestic abuse against men in Nigeria? And what are the social-cultural factors affecting the way service responders' approach domestic abuse?	13	67
Frequency	How often they think abuse against men occurs or how often they encounter it.	12	19
Past experiences of abuse	either direct experiences or witnessing abuse in their families as a child, includes opinions on being on the offensive because of past experiences.	5	7
Female perpetration	Defensiveness and protection, female aggression and being on the offensive	3	4
Power struggle	power struggle as a contributor to domestic abuse	2	4

Name	Description	Files	References
	i.e. power imbalance		
Reasons for male domestic abuse	This code represents participants explanation for what they think are the reasons for male domestic abuse, e.g Challenges to masculinity (toxic masculinity/hegemonic masculinity), revenge or retaliation, self-defence and economic conditions (poverty, job loss) etc.	12	32
Societal expectations	These expectations lead to a pattern of conflicts when both parties have different expectations, and these expectations are not met. Societal construct and expectations from culture, tradition, norms and religion. E.g., when a woman is not fulfilling her stereotypical gender role or the duties expected of her as a wife.	4	5
(RQ 3) Perceptions on help seeking	What do the service responders think are the main challenges in responding to male victims of domestic abuse?	8	42
Barriers to help seeking	E.g. challenges to masculinity, denial, illiteracy, ignorance and financial difficulties	6	11
Empowerment	This code represents victims process after help seeking, that is, gaining freedom from their abusive partners (self-confidence, commitment and advancement).	1	8
Help seeking behaviour	the process of help seeking and avoiding help. The conducts and behaviours of victims when they have the courage to report.	2	2
Religious suppression	when religious leaders try cover abuse, spiritualizing it as a spiritual attack	4	5
Societal perceptions as a barrier	seeing men as weaklings, expectations of a strong man.	5	15
Working with male victims	Interacting with victims and getting them involved in finding solutions and respecting victims wishes encourages the victims to follow through.	1	1
(RQ 3) Understanding Service responses	What do the service responders think are the main challenges in responding to male victims of domestic abuse?	13	86
Advocacy	action that speaks in favour of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf	2	2

Name	Description	Files	References
	of others		
Approach	the way domestic abuse victims are treated, whether they are treated by the circumstances of the case or by their gender. That is; Gentler approach	13	21
Awareness	Anything on the steps to make their services for men known and educating them.	7	7
Cultural and media representation	This will include discussions on lack of men that male victims of domestic abuse can identify with, making it hard to make them feel that there is a space. Publishing examples, invisibility in response services.	3	4
Improvements	Improvements in response to male victims	4	5
Intervention	provisions available to stop and minimize. Tackling the root cause	2	4
Motivation	Motivation for the job as stakeholders (that is, success stories and gratitude).	12	13
Resources	are there enough funds, shelters for male victims?	6	9
Responses	Descriptions on if they are adequate and response from family, friends, religious leaders. Services responding differently to male victims. E.g., Formal responses; from law enforcement and key stakeholders and informal responses: from family and friends.	9	12
Symbol of representation	This code represents discussions on if there are shelters specific to men available to represent inclusivity	2	2
Training issues	anything on the training available and the lack of training available for key stakeholders in domestic abuse	5	7
(RQ 4) Legal service challenges	How adequate are the current legislation and policies on addressing domestic abuse against men in Nigeria?	8	13
Adequacy of the available law	Their views on the adequacy and capabilities of the available laws in dealing with male victims.	8	9
Implementation of the law	Difference in law as it is and the implementation.	3	4

APPENDIX EIGHT: Sample data extract

Focus group discussion with community stakeholders/ personnel in a religious health care centre (counsellors and local faith leaders).

Interviewer introduced herself and gave a brief explanation on the purpose of the research, an outline of the interview questions and the participants rights.

Roles and responsibilities

Interviewer: What are your roles and responsibilities and how are these is linked to Domestic Abuse? the floor is open, anybody can start.

Counsellor 1 (Psychiatrist): ok ummm I am a psychiatrist here in Nigeria, and my duty is to assess and to evaluate patients with psychological issues, identifying the diagnosis and recommending treatment for them, holistic management for them. I work with a team of errrh psychologists, social workers, the chaplaincy and also the medical team, depending on the presentation of the patient. If the patient has poor mobilities. Also, I think I also work with some other specialities who are not health professionals depending on the presentation of the patient, the legal, the welfare, so many other and so many other relevant specialities, as I said it all the depends on the presentation of the patient.

Counsellor 2 (Psychologist): I am a clinical psychologist, and it also follows that pattern what we basically do is to assess and come up with diagnosis, as well as a treatment plan to implement an umm I also work with psychiatrists, you know? The social workers and the chaplaincy, I think I just touched on my responsibilities. Ok ummm how long have I worked in this I have worked in this sector for 10 years. Ummm What motivated me to work in this field I think erm just the interest to improve individuals' wellbeing, so yes I guess peoples mental wellbeing; I see it as an avenue to improve on my own mental state and to help people. Well... usually the day starts with erm going to the chapel before going back to the clinic, sometimes we do the review of patients and then go on ward round to see the patients admitted the previous week and then the clinic starts for the day. We try to establish a relationship with the clients before we now try to address the issue, we also discuss with the patient, come up with a treatment plan then we implement the treatment plan. That is basically my role and responsibility.

Interviewer: erm sorry to interrupt you ma'am, thank you but you don't actually have to answer everything in this section at once.....

Counsellor 3 (Chaplain): Well... I'll go next, I am a chaplain and I have been doing this for over 15 years and I ummm I just derive joy from helping people, so I just do this work to help. My primary assignment is to assess and help patients with emotional issues and help them to cope better and I umm also work together with the psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, social workers. I also do rounds in the clinic. In fact, I was on my rounds when I was called and reminded about this interview. So, that's basically what I do.

Counsellor 4 (Pastor): ok ummm I have been here for some time now, starting with the chaplaincy department, I was initially the liaison between the errr student support centre and the clinic since 2008 till when I was finally deployed to the clinic, so I guess I work in a mix of psycho spiritual. And that is how I have been working since. My real job description is to find out the psychological and spiritual aspect of things, sorry I mean the main area I specialize in My main specialization is healthcare chaplaincy and clinical psychology. Just as others have said, it is the assessment, and from the assessment, it's diagnosis and from there the treatment plan. Clinical psychologists serve all the units because they are core mobilities that are psychological aspects, we need to give psychotherapy, basically we do not prescribe medication; we use psychotherapy to help out in all units. So that is basically the little I have been doing, I work with the clinic, a teaching hospital, chaplaincy and a student support centre.

Counsellor 5 (Director): I am the Director of this support centre, I got my PhD in guidance and counselling, I specialized in clinical psychology. So, I have been working in this sector for many years. I am also an internationally certified family life practitioner, myself and my husband and with special emphasis on conflict management, I belong to a body of institute of conciliators and mediators. So, I have been working on family life issues with many intending couples, coincidentally my husband is also a pastor, we do this work together and this is provided us with the platform to come in touch with a lot of couples and to attend retreats and make presentations on issues concerning couples including domestic abuse, and even with my role here as a director. I come across a lot of domestic abuse victims, it affects couples and children, it affects their psyche and everything about them. This is basically what we do, and we come across these issues all the time.

Interviewer: Thank you, we are moving to Conceptualizing domestic abuse, since most of the other questions have already been answered in the beginning, so how would you define Domestic Abuse and what are the forms of Domestic Abuse that you are aware of? please anybody can answer this.

Counsellor 2: I think it is any pattern of behaviour in a relationship that is unhealthy, it can be sexual, physical; emotional; now I have been hearing of spiritual abuse, you might not be familiar with that form, but it is when a partner tries to force a partner to accept a religious belief that they do not believe in. Basically, any unhealthy pattern of behaviour that exists in relationships can be seen as domestic abuse.

Counsellor 1: I would also like to add that, apart from what she said that it also comes into play when there is errrrr domestic abuse comes into play when there is a disparity in power, when there is oppression, the other person has a higher power than the recipient, usually the perpetrator has more power and manipulative. And I errrr I think I want to add to the types mentioned, besides from the emotional, psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, she also added spiritual, I will also add financial abuse. Because sometimes, the person that has the money tends to deny the other person because of that, they oppress the other person. Can I also add that, I don't know if it is added now but I have noticed that umm sooo when it comes to levels of intellect, ummm sometimes when one person is more educated than the other partner, they can use it to abuse the other partner. And I think another one is the hmmmmm, I don't really know how to describe this but for example where the person that has the higher power in the relationship has a political inclination or orientation and wants the partner to forcefully conform to their own political orientation, I don't know where to place that, I guess you can call it political abuse? I'm not sure (*everybody chuckles*).

Interviewer: does anybody else want to say anything, ok no one. The next question is, in your view, what do you think are the key causes of domestic abuse?

All the Counsellors (*they all chimed in together*): Disparity in power, poverty, religion, ignorance, culture.

Counsellor 4: Culture! Culture surely contributes to abuse. When we talk about culture, we also see culture within the religious aspect as she just said, we find out there are people that are justifying abuse on both sides, basically the men justifying abuse that they are the head, the dominion mandate using culture and religion as a cover. (*Whisper from Counsellor 2: 'thank God it is a man saying all this', everybody laughed after she made this statement*).

But since we are talking about the male as victims, I won't delve into that too much. But as she rightly said, sometimes when a partner has the power has a better standing in the family, has a better education and is the major provider in this instance the woman, there could be abuse against the man. (*Interviewer went on a tangent about genetics*) well that is not what we are talking about umm back to the question yeah ummm I have an example of a case I treated in the clinic, where the man is infertile and cannot perform his manly duties to a woman. The man was subjected to emotional abuse for years until the man had high blood pressure and he came to the general hospital and they kept on trying to treat him but he was not getting better, so he was referred to my department and so we had to trace back and that is how we found out that he is a deacon in the church but he has three kids with his wife and found out they were not his and he had been living with them under the assumption that they were his biological children. When he found out, you can imagine what that meant, he started having suicidal thoughts, avoiding staying at home..... I think we can call that organic causes. The man could not explain to anybody because of the cultural stigma. He suffered silently until he was finally referred to the psychologist because he was not doing better physically. Luckily it was a good doctor and a good hospital and after he has tried and he was not getting better, he was referred to us, because many of these hospitals in Nigeria will not have recognised his psychological pain. When we found the root cause, we helped him, and his blood pressure started to come down. We helped the man, psycho education and we helped accept those children. So, I will emphasize on religion and culture as key causes of domestic abuse.

Counsellor 1: Can I also add to that? um other causes, if the one with the higher power has a mental illness, substance abuse and also higher social status could contribute to domestic abuse. if the other partner is not doing as well as the spouse there can also be abuse in that situation

Counsellor 3: I would like to add that upbringing also could contribute to domestic abuse. Growing up as a child seeing all that abuse growing up into an adult. The abused person can take the position of the abuser.

Counsellor 4: Sorry for interrupting you, I think there is a name for that, when a child grows up in an abusive environment

Counsellor 2: I think it's just learning; the child learns that abusive behaviour as normal, it could also be seen as childhood trauma

Interviewer: What is your understanding of domestic abuse against men?

Counsellor 1: Nobody talks about it in Nigeria, the men don't talk about it, it would have really been lovely to do a prevalence study to know the exact prevalence, but men will not talk about it because culturally you will be seen as a weakling when you start talking about being abused by somebody that is seemingly a 'weaker vessel'. The society is not ready to listen to such men, they will think they are irresponsible, they are not matured, and they are not man enough. And they will also believe that the woman has bewitched the man especially his family.

Counsellor 4: Ummm yeah while in some other places like the United Kingdom or if you check online, you can find the prevalence of domestic abuse against women, it is not the same in Nigeria and this all boils down to our culture. If I personally call my mom up now *(he starts laughing and the remaining participants joined in, one of the participants also chimed in and said you mom will even abuse you)* and tell her that my wife abuses, my mom will verbally abuse me too, asking me if I am normal. Let me give you an example, when I was growing up, my mom did not allow the girls in my family to use our bucket, the day she finds the girls using the boys bucket, the one used to take a bath, she will be very angry that in doing so you are weakening my son. That the woman is not supposed to use the bathing bucket that a man is using. That is a cultural background and all of us grew up with the belief that once a woman touches your bathing bucket that you are weak, and that is the kind of training we received at that time. We grew up with this kind of training believing that if you express your mind when you are being abused that the society and the culture will frown at that, and that is why it will be tough to identify men being abused. The female they express their mind and their pain, but males are told big boys don't cry, we bottle everything in and that is why we die early too.

Counsellor 5: That is true, it has consequences, it will affect their health, their psychological wellbeing, it will also affect their relationship with others, sometimes making them more aggressive, and they will be more prone to anger because they can't speak out. Because of that they can be irritable, depression can set in, anxiety, high blood pressure, all sorts of illnesses will set in, and they die early. Men need to express themselves. In Nigeria, it is worse because of the stigma. So, which one is better?

(Everyone chimes in yes, it is better to express yourself).

Interviewer: Ok thank you we are moving to Understanding domestic abuse against men. We are moving specifically to questions on domestic abuse on men. So, the next question is ‘have you ever had any case with men as victims of domestic abuse and how frequently do you deal with them?’

Counsellor 5: Like we said it is not frequently reported, mind you it is not that it does not happen frequently but because of the stigma they don’t speak out. We have handled some. For example, A young couple, the wife was always suspecting him of cheating and because of his involvement with other women in the ward. The wife can empty a bag of sachet water on him just because, and when she talks the man will not be able to express himself well so in other to get at the man, she has also at another time smashed his laptop and all the work he had saved and he was a businessman were all lost, she didn’t just smash it she went to his google cloud storage and destroyed everything. So, he had experienced that severally and it came to our notice, what he did was that he packed out of the house and the woman still went all around looking for him. It became a toxic circle. At a point I had to seek the services of a lawyer, it was that bad. And it is usually underreported.

Counsellor 1: As she said, it is usually underreported and based on previous explanations given, even if you put it to a man, you know? that there is help, he is not ready to talk about it. They will tell you they can handle it, they are on top of it and that they are in control.

Counsellor 4: In addition, there is a rare case that is in court right now and ummm the man tried to manage it alone. The pastor that joined them referred them here to speak to a clinical psychologist because he could not handle it again, the woman was the one that came to meet me after the husband had decided to pack out of the house. So, I met with the husband, the man being a learned person kept all the record of the abuse, jackets that chemicals had been poured on by his wife, pictures and so on. By the time I heard the whole story from the man, I called the pastor that referred them and told him that the husband had decided that he would take the abuse again and had taken the case to court, that he could not stay and take such abuse anymore. So, the case is still in Court till now. I found that before it escalated to this, he had tried to talk to the pastor beforehand about the abuse he had been enduring but professional intervention was not done, the pastor tried to cover it up and spiritualized it as an attack and now it has escalated, by the time the pastor realised that he could not cover it again, he could no longer spiritualize it, it was already too late.

Counsellor 3: Yeah umm also I also handled a case where the husband supported the wife until she got her PhD, but after this she felt she was more learned than her husband and so she decided to start talking down to her husband, and errrh this involved verbal and emotional abuse and all he could do was just say sorry, agree to everything and he errr became very quiet and withdrawn. He finally reacted when he saw his wife with another man, he got infuriated and he hit her at that point. It became painful on the part of the man, you know? He took all the blame at the end because he was the one that hit her first. He had to apologize and pay a fine. He could no longer perform as a man at home because psychologically he was belittled to the point that he had to check himself with another woman to see if he was really weak not being able to meet his wife because his wife used to talk down to him which again became another struggle or issue. But as a man he was not able to speak out.

Interviewer: Thank you, these few cases you have experienced, how were they brought to your attention? Did the men come to you personally to talk about it?

Counsellor 4: Okay, For me, the two or more that I have treated were referred to me. The first case I mentioned earlier about the man with the 3 children that were not his, was because he came to the hospital for high blood pressure and after treating all physical the doctor referred for psychological check-up. That is where we were able to assess, and the man explained his pain, the woman was also invited in, and she accepted that it happened. So, referral. It is always on the consult referral. Left to the men, I doubt they will step out on their own, looking at our culture. I think the most impact of domestic abuse on men is emotional pain and mental pain because they absorb without seeking treatment or intervention making it to escalate. It can also lead to alcohol and drug abuse.

Counsellor 1: Actually, if you don't look for it you won't find it. So, anybody providing intervention must always have that suspicion that something might be happening in the home and if you are not careful with how you put it, you won't get the information because the man will want to cover it up or play it down, or there is nothing wrong. It has to be from your own assessment because the men would not come with that presentation of abuse unlike the women that will outrightly say they have been abused; men will not come out to say that and they find it hard to come to terms with it. You have to be sharp-witted to check for the signs. Even when you explain it to them, you have to tease it out of them and let them know these things you are explaining is called abuse.

Counsellor 2: I think I love the way she ended that, the first thing is to identify what is considered abuse, they might not see it abuse and just say their wife is just being troublesome. The identification of what exactly is abuse is very important. There are somethings that Nigerians will never call abuse even though it is, for example when a wife is tired and the husband forces himself on her, many Nigerians will not belief that is abuse, but this is rape and not many people know that, so yeah she put it rightly and that should be known.

Interviewer: How are cases concerning male domestic abuse responded to by your colleagues?

Counsellor 1: Hmmm People laugh, and they make jokes of men suffering from abuse from their wife and some are irritated because they belief you should be man enough to handle your home. They see them as failures, they make derogatory statements about them because they belief that a man should be strong, coupled with the fact the way we describe men in our society, they are synonymous to strength and control. I can't imagine telling a colleague that is not a psychiatrist that, 'that man is being abused at home' they will be surprised and make statements on how the man cannot make his wife submissive, your wife cannot listen to you and all that. The discrimination, the gest, the name calling, the shame.

Counsellor 4: That calls for enlightenment, education and awareness of this kind of abuse. The environment does not allow for anyone to belief just as she said, they will say you have to be man enough to fight for yourself and defend yourself. Even some mothers thought us, 'you are a man go out and fight'. As there is awareness on abuse for women victims of domestic abuse, there should be for men too, yes. There should be research done to determine the prevalence because from there we can build up.

Interviewer: Do you have training that highlights on men as possible victims of domestic abuse?

Counsellor 1: Nobody talks about male domestic abuse. So, it is a good thing that the world is gradually looking into abuse against men. We have trainings but they usually focus on the women as victims, you understand? And I think it is a good thing that gradually the world is looking into taking care of the men. For example, this days you find out that you know, its all over the news almost every week that a man has killed his wife or a wife killing her husband, just this week alone I have seen on the news spouses killing their partner about two or three cases, it is coming up every now and then. Though women are the majority victims, I think

we should also give room to men to talk about their pain. I believe we should have special training so we can understand the biological makeup of the men and why they behave the way they do, so the world can see their own vulnerability too. The saying men are not meant to cry is harmful, if a man has depression nobody will know until it is severe, and even after identifying this he would most probably still be in denial, you get? So yeah umm a man presenting with erectile dysfunction, and you do everything, but you know that it is most probably some psychological issues they are dealing with and the moment you mention that, you are not likely to see them again because you have pricked that raw and painful area. They don't want to talk about it because it is also going to bring up their own seemingly weakness, which is actually not a weakness. Gradually, we have to teach men that it is okay to cry, it is okay to talk about your pain if you want to, to make them feel safe. There is no special training on men as victims of domestic abuse.

Counsellor 4: Yeah, in addition to that, as psychologists we are trained to pay attention. When we assess someone there are some questions we need to ask especially after establishing a good rapport with the person. There are three areas to look at when we assess, one is the way the person thinks (his thought pattern), the activities of the person and finally the relationships he keeps. If we are able to cut out the first two, we know that the problem is coming from his relationship (*counsellor went on a tangent here*).

Counsellor 5: This is an issue we actually need to pay attention to, because of how much men keep things bottled in, when they explode it can be disastrous. I know of a case where the man finally snapped and killed his wife and became a murderer because he was not able to express his pain and frustration.

Counsellor 3: That reminds me of a case where the woman was the one beating her husband, but she was the one screaming and it is normal that it is the one that is wailing that you will attend to. I ummm handled a case of a woman that is a nurse and so she is highly paid and makes more money than her husband. She lives her ATM card with the man, but he dares not use it, and so whenever there is a need for decision making in the home the man always used to say 'my wife has the final say' because she was in control of the man. Umm so in terms of education, I will say that it will take courage from the man to speak out and encouragement from professionals to speak out, because for a man there is a feeling of shame if errrm, it is unheard of, and it sounds strange to say a man is being abused and so they prefer to keep quiet. As a chaplain giving emotional and spiritual support, what I do is pray and sometimes

when I ask for their prayer requests, they sometimes from their body language, tone and the uncompleted statements you will realise that the man is going through some form of abuse.

Challenges

Interviewer: Are there any barriers to the protection of male victims of domestic abuse?

Counsellor 1: The men themselves, the victim themselves are the major barriers. Umm of course, on the flip side, the women too can also be that barrier to them getting treatment. The other barrier is the society. In as much as female abuse is widely recognised and we are sensitized, due to stigma a lot of women are still not talking about their own abuse, now telling a man to seek a redress, injunction or to go to court is an embarrassment. So he is not willing to talk about it because even umm, I can imagine the judge, the presiding judge handling this case, because we are a product of our culture, and our culture expects that man to have the boldness, the courage the will, the tenacity, the assertiveness to be able to 'manage his home', him not being able to do that will tag him an imbecile by some people. I can imagine the face of the judge, wait except the judge is enlightened on domestic abuse against men, if the man and woman are standing before the judge, and the man is saying she has been abusing me, I can't imagine her taking the man serious. People too will not take him seriously and will start reading meaning to it, especially if she is richer. People can say that he just wants to take advantage of her wealth and that he is not really being abused and is not telling the truth. I know it is because we don't have all those policies out there that protects the men, I am sure if we dig, we might find some but even the government structure does not have anything to protect the men, most of the organisations deal with violence against women. We have a seat in the ministry that takes care of female rights and the girl child, I don't know of any law that deals with abuse against men, but we have that well spelt out when it comes to the women. I think those are challenges that we have. That could be probably why most of these resources are not channelled toward taking care of the men.

Interviewer: That was the last question, does anybody have any other thing they want to say? No? ok thank you.