

Dating Violence Among Students of Lagos State Polytechnic Ikorodu: Implications For Counselling

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Abstract

The study investigated the predisposing factors and the common forms of dating violence among students of higher institutions so as to provide information on the extent of dating violence among undergraduates of tertiary institutions. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprised students of Lagos State Polytechnic, Ikorodu. From the institution, 300 students were purposively selected. An instrument titled Dating Violence among Undergraduates Questionnaire (DVUQ) was developed by the researchers to collect data for the study. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentage. The results revealed that, physical and psychological violence were prevalent among students of Lagos State Polytechnic, Ikorodu with 31.0% and 17.0% respectively. It also indicated the factors that predisposed the students to dating violence. These were being secretive (44.6%), carefree attitude (44.3%), keeping wrong company (36.7%), non-tolerance (34.3%) and poor sense of responsibility (34.0%). It also revealed that particular coping strategies such as open communication with one's partner (89.7%), using respectful language and always speak up (88.3%), definition of a healthy relationship (87.0%), be a positive role model (87.0%) and withdrawal from unhealthy relationship (79.6%) can be used to curb or reduce dating violence among them and their dating partners. It's also expected that the results of the study will impart effectively on the learning outcomes and social adjustment of students in tertiary institutions. It was concluded that as students of tertiary institution, counselling and provisions of facilities capable of enhancing students personnel management practice in tertiary institutions be put in place to enable the students appreciate the full potentials of tertiary institution such that dating violence can be reduced and that this teaming youths could grow up to become responsible adults and spouses.

Keywords: dating violence, undergraduates, counselling, students, personnel management,

INTRODUCTION

Violence can be defined as the intentional use of force, power or threat on oneself, another person, or against a group of people which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maladjustment or economic deprivation. Violence and other forms of abuse are most commonly understood as a pattern of behaviour intended to establish and maintain control over family, household members, intimate partners, colleagues, individuals or groups. Violence is seen as aggressive behavior where the actor or perpetrator uses his or her own body as an object, including a weapon to inflict injury, pain or discomfort upon an individual. However, generally, anything that is acted in an injurious or damaging way may be described as violent even if not meant to be violence by a person and against a person.

Different forms of violence have been identified among which are domestic violence, intimate partner violence, gender-based violence and dating violence. The main thrust of this study is dating violence.

Dating violence is defined as the physical, sexual, psychological or emotional aggression within a dating relationship including stalking. Dating violence is the attempt, act, or intent of someone within a relationship, where the relationship is characterized by intimacy, dependency or trust, to intimidate either by threat or by the use of physical force on another person or property. The purpose of the abuse is to control and exploit through, neglect, intimidation, and inducement of fear or by inflicting pains. According to Holtzworth-Munroe (1992), dating violence is a form of relationship abuse which involves insult or assault. It is a maladaptive behaviour in relationship among partners which can have severe physical and psychological consequences. It can lead to homicide or suicide in extreme cases as well as emotional symptoms stemming from depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). As pointed out by Roberts (1996), partner violence was formerly conceptualized as consisting of a relationship narrow range of acts, predominantly the use of minor physical force. It is now generally recognized as a continuum of abuse,

including homicide, minor and severe physical assault, sexual assault, threats and harassment, robbery, property damage, kidnapping, stalking, economic deprivation, animal abuse, and psychological coercion and intimidation. Loveisrespect.org (2016) an advocacy website aiming to prevent abusive relationships reported that 81% of parents either believe that dating violence is an issue or do not know if it's an issue.

Dating violence could also be defined as the perpetration or threat of an act of violence by at least one member of an unmarried couple on the other member within the context of dating or courtship. It is also when one partner tries to maintain power and control the other through abuse or violence. This abuse or violence can take a number of forms: sexual assault, sexual harassment, threats, physical violence, verbal, mental, or emotional abuse, social sabotage, and stalking. It can include psychological abuse, emotional blackmail, sexual abuse, physical abuse and psychological manipulation. The Center for Relationship Abuse Awareness describes dating abuse as a "pattern of abusive and coercive behaviors used to maintain power and control over a former or current intimate partner".

Dating violence includes uneven power dynamics, control, jealousy and threats regarding a relationship. Patterns of dating violence behaviour often start early and carry through into adult relationships. Violent relationships in adolescence can have serious implications for victims. Many will continue to be abused in their adult life relationships and are at a higher risk for substance abuse, eating disorders, risky sexual behaviors, and suicide. Lack of conflict handling skills and growing up in environments that celebrate violence or in communities that experience high rates of violence can lead to unhealthy and even violent relationship among students (Adamo, 2014).

Numerous studies in the United States and Canada have found an extremely high prevalence of physical assault on dating partners by university students. For example, in Canada and the United States, 20% to 40% of students reported one or more assaults (Hotaling & Sugarman, 1989). A study by Gryl, Stith and Bird (1991) assessed prevalence rates of physical dating violence among college students, by comparing violent relationship to non-violent ones. In reference to initiating violence, respondents reported 51% of the time their partners initiated violence, 41% reported they initiated and 8% reported both individuals were equally responsible (i.e. pushed, slapped, hit with object, kicked, use of lethal weapon, etc.). In many countries a substantial proportion of women experiencing physical violence also experienced sexual abuse. In Mexico and the United States, studies estimated that 40-52% of women experiencing physical violence by an intimate partner

have also been sexually coerced by that partner. Findings from the national Youth Risk Behaviour Surveillance Survey (YRBSS) revealed that 94% of high school students reported being physically hurt for example hit or slapped by a boyfriend or girlfriend intentionally (Centre for Disease and Control and Prevention, 2011).

Ajuwon, Funmilayo and Osungbade (2011) carried out a cross-sectional survey to assess experience and perpetration of physical, sexual and psychological violent behaviors among school-based adolescents. A total of 1366 students (50.4% females and 49.6% males) randomly selected from six public secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria were interviewed using a 36-item questionnaire. Respondents answered questions regarding demographic profile, sexual behaviour, and the extent to which they had experienced or perpetrated physical, sexual and psychological violent behaviors. The predictors of experience of violence among males were use of alcohol, witnessing domestic violence, involving in work and parental use of alcohol. Among females, parental use of alcohol and being young were predictors of violence. Reports of perpetration of physical, sexual and psychological violence among males were 75.3%, 44.9% and 13.3% respectively. Existing research on the prevalence of verbal and physical abuse among college students provides further insight into this issue. For example, one study on dating violence among college students evaluated specifically verbally and physically abusive behaviours. Out of the 572 respondents, the results indicated that 82% reported being verbally abused, and 21% reported physically aggressive behaviours towards a partner (Shook, Gerrity, Jurich & Segrist, 2000).

In a survey, 21 percent of male adolescents and 22 percent of female adolescents reported physical or psychological abuse by an intimate partner (Roberts, 1996). In another national study, 32 percent of adolescents reported experiencing either psychological or physical violence, with the figures being almost identical for both males and females (Halpern, Oslak & Young, 2001). These suggest that the rates of dating violence are similar across genders. According to another national study, 29 percent of the young women surveyed who had ever been in a relationship said that they had been pressured to have sex or to engage in sexual activity they did not want (Claiborne, 2006). Comparatively, females between ages 16 and 24 are more vulnerable to intimate partner/dating violence than any other age group - at a rate almost triple the national average. Male peer support for violence against women is a constant predictor of male violence within post-secondary educational institutions. This finding supports the general trend of increased aggression among adolescent girls. It is clear that dating violence

is a significant issue that needs urgent attention by all stakeholders in education particularly school counsellors and personnel management. Therefore, the study identified forms and prevalence of dating violence among students of LASPOTECH, examined the predisposing factors to dating violence among students and; identified coping strategies used to curb dating violence among students of Lagos State Polytechnic, Ikorodu.

Statement of the Problem

The reported prevalence and magnitude of dating violence still suggest a gap in the literature in western societies with regard to the reality of such in non-western cultures, especially when gender related violence have been shown to be culture related both in terms of the prevalence, magnitude and predisposing factors (Ehindero, 2010, Rubio-Garay, *et al.*, 2017). Hence, the study was designed to examine the prevalence, predisposing factors and coping strategies hither to be widespread among undergraduates of tertiary institutions who are the would-be adults of tomorrow and expected to lead responsible lives. Since it is at this stage personalities are formed, and that schools are meant to build and not to destroy, it becomes pertinent to examine dating violence among this group vis-à-vis its forms and predisposing factors with a view to discussing its implications for counselling and students personnel management practice.

Purpose of the Study

- a. To identify the forms and prevalence of dating violence among students of LASPOTECH;
- b. To examine the predisposing factors to dating violence and;
- c. To identify coping strategies that can be used to curb dating violence.

Significance of the Study

The study will inform individual student on different forms of dating violence, this will eventually enable dating partners to promptly respond and take necessary action when victimized. It will also

sensitize the dating partners of the different strategies available to cope with dating violence. The result of the study will add to the increasing stock of knowledge in the literature on dating violence among undergraduates. The study will also establish the correlation relationship between different forms of dating violence to their predisposing factors thus provide a solid foundation for effective counselling of undergraduates.

Limitation of the Study

The study is limited to students of southwest tertiary institution. In addition not all factors suspected to predispose students to dating violence are incorporated in the study. Hence the results should be interpreted in the context of the factors used in the study.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted survey research design. The population for the study comprised undergraduates of Lagos State Polytechnic (LASPOTECH), Ikorodu. A sample of 300 undergraduates was drawn from the institution. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique. An instrument titled Dating Violence among Undergraduates Questionnaire (DVUQ) was used to collect data for the study and subjected to test of reliability from which coefficient of .88 was obtained. The questionnaire had three sections; Section A covered demographic information of the respondents, while Sections B and C consisted of items that addressed the forms, prevalence and predisposing factors respectively. The responses obtained were subjected to analysis using the simple percentage via SPSS.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the forms and prevalent rate of dating violence among undergraduates of Lagos State Polytechnic, Ikorodu? To answer this, respondents’ responses were subjected to analysis using simple percentage.

Table 1: Identified Common Forms of Dating Violence among Undergraduates

S/N	ITEMS	Very often		Often		Rarely		None	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Slapping	12	4.0	20	6.7	36	12.0	232	77.3
2.	Scolding	30	10.0	39	13.0	91	30.3	140	46.7
3.	Pushing	14	4.7	20	6.7	40	13.3	226	75.3
4.	Sexual Act	9	3.0	14	4.7	23	7.7	254	84.7
5.	Assault	12	4.0	14	4.7	27	9.0	238	79.3
6.	Physical combat	15	5.0	14	4.7	27	9.0	244	81.3
7.	Calling names	46	15.3	47	15.7	59	19.7	148	49.3
8.	Weapons	3	1.0	10	3.3	16	5.3	271	90.3
9.	Grudges	23	7.7	23	7.7	72	24.0	182	60.7
10.	Malice	23	7.7	56	18.7	80	26.7	141	47.0
11.	Attack on property	7	2.3	11	3.7	14	4.7	268	89.3
12.	Kidnapping	4	1.3	3	1.0	20	6.7	273	91
13.	Intimidation	16	5.3	16	5.3	48	16.0	220	73.3
14.	Deprivation	16	5.3	20	6.7	54	18.0	210	70.0
15.	Stalking	11	3.7	18	6.0	34	11.3	237	79.0

Table 1 shows categories represented the three forms of dating violence; psychological, physical and sexual violence. Items, 2, 3,, 6,8 and 11 represented physical violence; items 2, 9, 10, 13, 7,14 and 15 represented psychological dating violence and 4, 5 represented sexual act. Responses on the table classified as very often and often were collapsed into often while those responses classified as rarely and none were collapsed as none. The most prevalent forms of dating violence were psychological violence; calling names (31.0%), malice (26.4%), scolding (23.0.0%), grudges (15.4%), economic deprivation (12.0%), intimidation (10.6%) ; physical

violence; pushing (11.4%), slapping (10.7%), stalking (9.7%), physical combat (9.7%), attack on property (6%), use of weapon, kidnapping(2.3%) and sexual violence was the least prevalent; assault (8.7%) and sexual act (7.7%)

Research Question 2: What are the predisposing factors of dating violence among undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Lagos State? To answer this, respondents’ responses were subjected to analysis using simple percentage. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Predisposing Factors to Dating Violence among Undergraduates

S/N	ITEMS	SA		A		D		SD	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Smoking Cigarette	25	8.3	26	8.7	34	11.3	215	71.7
2	Smoking of Indian Hemp	22	7.3	30	10.0	34	11.3	214	71.3
3	Drinking of Alcohol	29	9.7	57	19.0	62	20.7	152	50.7
4	Having multiple sex partners	44	14.7	49	16.3	46	15.3	161	53.7
5	Sexual inactiveness	24	8.0	40	13.3	61	20.3	175	58.3
6	Immodest dressing	32	10.7	64	21.3	61	20.3	143	47.7
7	Carefree attitude	51	17.0	82	27.3	49	16.3	118	39.3
8	Low self-esteem	29	9.7	62	20.7	77	25.7	132	44.0
9	Keeping common purse	27	9.0	47	15.7	73	24.3	153	51.0
10	Keeping wrong company	57	19.0	53	17.7	52	17.3	138	46.0
11	Family background	34	11.3	62	20.7	70	23.3	134	44.7
12	Cultural differences	26	8.7	68	22.7	61	20.3	145	48.3
13	Being secretive	55	18.3	79	26.3	54	18.0	112	37.3
14	Poor sense of appreciation	40	13.3	58	19.3	55	18.3	147	49.0
15	Poor sense of responsibility	45	15.0	57	19.0	47	15.7	151	50.3
16	Non-tolerance	43	14.3	60	20	57	19	140	46.7

Table 2 shows that being secretive (44.6%), carefree attitude (44.3%), keeping wrong company (36.7%), non-tolerance (34.3%), poor sense of responsibility (34.0%), poor sense of appreciation (32.6%), immodest dressing (32.0%) and poor family upbringing (32.0%) were the predisposing factors to

dating violence among undergraduates of Lagos State Polytechnic, Ikorodu.

Research Question 3: What are the coping strategies to curb dating violence among undergraduates of tertiary institutions of Lagos State?

Table 3: Coping strategies used to curb dating violence

S/N	ITEMS	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Sensitization on issues pertaining to dating violence	127	42.3	109	36.3	33	11.0	31	10.3
2.	Counselling dating partner on the right attitude by a counsellor	131	43.7	116	38.7	27	9.0	26	8.7
3.	Open communication with your partner	171	57.0	98	32.7	18	6.0	13	4.3
4.	Belief that a safe world free of violence is possible	115	38.3	112	37.3	47	15.7	26	8.7
5.	Using respectful language and always speak up/out	181	60.3	84	28.0	15	5.0	20	8.7
6.	Be a positive role model	168	56.0	93	31.0	15	5.0	24	8.0
7.	Open communication about sexual activity with your partner.	117	39.0	108	36.0	45	15.0	29	9.7
8.	Withdrawal from violent relationship	163	54.3	76	25.3	22	7.3	39	13.0
9.	Challenge society’s view of men as violent and women as passive	95	31.7	108	36.0	59	19.7	38	12.7
10.	Advocating for a healthy relationship	141	47.0	120	40.0	25	8.3	14	4.7

Table 3 shows that the coping strategies mostly used to curb dating violence were open communication with the partner (89.7%), using respectful language

and always speak up (88%), advocating for a healthy relationship (87.0%), a positive role model (87.0%), counselling dating partner on the right attitude by a

counsellor (82.4%) and withdrawal from violent relationship (79.6%).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study found that there are three forms of psychological, physical and sexual forms of dating violence and it was revealed that the victims of dating violence were susceptible to psychological and verbal abuse of dating violence. This finding was corroborated by earlier studies (Ehindero, 2010, Shorey, *et al.*, 2013, Joly, *et al.*, 2016, & Rubio-Garay, *et al.*, 2017) reported that there are three main forms of dating violence; psychological, physical and sexual violence and these forms such as pushing, calling names, pinching, grudges and sexual act were prevalent among students. It was discovered that violent acts like kidnapping, use of weapon, physical combat and attack on property were not prevalent. This could be as a result of the fact that the society at large frowns at such acts and severe punishment awaits perpetrators. This study also showed that being secretive was one of the factors predisposing undergraduates to dating violence, that being secretive as a change in partner's attitude can make him or her to be victimized in a relationship. A Carefree attitude can also predisposed partner to dating violence as this was corroborated with the view of Wade (2013) who postulated that a carefree attitude in a relationship gives birth to loss of trust among dating partners. Many of the respondents agreed that non-tolerance also predisposed partners to dating violence, which was in line with the view of Poet (2011) that teens do not seem to be able to tolerate difficult feelings such as anger, frustration and jealousy, thus might be forced to take on violent act. Poor sense of responsibility was another predisposing factor to dating violence.

This was corroborated with the study of Jewkes (2002) that intimate violence occurred when there is absence of whom to take up a certain responsibility among the partner. Furthermore, poor family upbringing was reported to also predispose partners to dating violence, that home is the most fertile breeding place for violent behavior for example, a child who sees his/her parents or family members engaging in fighting often may perceive violence as a way to problem solving and may likely engage in violent act. Some individuals are aggressive and thus exhibit violent behavior probably because they have been unconsciously taught at home by their parents or sibling that intimidating and verbally abusing others are the best means of getting your way (Erinne, 2005).

Finally, it was found that open communication with one's partner, respectful language, assertiveness, advocating for a healthy relationship, withdrawal from unhealthy relationship, positive role model and

counseling are key strategies used by the students to curb dating violence among partners.

CONCLUSION

Results of the study are consistent with earlier studies in Western cultures in terms of the frequency , magnitude and factors predisposing undergraduates to dating violence . Some of the variations or uniqueness in the strategies used by Nigerian undergraduates in coping with the phenomenon (dating violence) for example (use of particular language, mode of communication, society's perceptions about male and female roles) different from those reported for undergraduates in Western societies. These differences are suspected to be culture related which further research will ascertain.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Adolescents are to some extent products of the culture, they grow up in, and hence the frequency, forms, magnitude of dating violence and the different strategies used to cope and curb are expected/ suspected to be influenced by the dynamics of the culture the adolescents grow up.
- Adolescents should be educated about the problems emanating from perpetrating violence in relationships as early as possible so that they grow up to understand and appreciate the gains of healthy relationships.
- Elaborate and focused enlightenment programme is recommended for the key stakeholders (Counsellors, lecturers, students, parents etc) in tertiary institutions where adolescence and its micro-culture will be x-rayed with emphasis on the challenges of dating violence.

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