

**PENTECOSTALISM AND THE MANAGEMENT OF SPOUSAL VIOLENCE AMONG
BENIN WOMEN OF EDO STATE, NIGERIA**

By

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**A Thesis submitted to the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Obafemi Awolowo
University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria**

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DEDICATION

To the memory of Titilayo Arowolo and all the unknown women that have silently and secretly suffered spousal violence.

Violently, let us break the silence.

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CERTIFICATION

We hereby certify that this work was carried out by H N AGHOLOR of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to understand Pentecostalism and the management of spousal violence among Benin women of Edo State Nigeria. The study also assessed how Pentecostal churches manage the incidences of spousal violence among their female members. It identified the forms of social, spiritual or psychological supports women receive from Pentecostal churches. It also appraised how adequate are these supports in the light of those who benefited from such services.

Exploratory research design was adopted in this study. In-depth interviews were conducted across the study targets. In all, a total of thirty-two interview sessions were conducted in the study location. Twenty-four interviews were conducted with the women; seven interviews with the Pastors and one interview with the Coordinator of SOTHA WACA selected for the study. The selected Pentecostal churches based on Gaiya (2002) typology of Nigerian Pentecostal churches are: Miracle, Prosperity, Faith and Holiness Pentecostal churches. Omega Fire Ministry International is “miracle” focused. The Church of God Mission is a “prosperity” preaching Pentecostal church. Redeemed Christian Church of God is a “faith based” Pentecostal church while; the Deeper Life Bible Church is under “holiness” teaching church. Benin City was purposively selected because it is renowned as the crucible for Pentecostalism movement in Nigeria. Field data was presented using Z-Y index tables while content analysis was used for the analysis of data.

The findings revealed that Pentecostal churches manage the incidences of spousal violence through the marriage and counselling committee in collaboration with the Pastors when they mediate by counselling and praying for the abused and the abuser. It was observed that there are taboos in Benin that restricts women from speaking out against violence and divorce is not an option during violence. Likewise, Pentecostal doctrine also preaches submission of the woman to

the authority of the man. Most women did not admit the existence of spousal violence in the church basically because they sworn before the altar 'to hold and to cherish, in sickness and in health ... till death do them part'. The findings also revealed that the main identifiable form of support that victims of spousal violence received from the Pentecostal church is the spiritual support. Prayer was seen as the solution to all marital problems. However, some women claimed that they also received some kind of emotional support from the "women meetings" which they attended during the week. In the same vein, the marriage and counselling committee of the church also showed care and love to the victims of spousal violence. Furthermore, it was revealed from the findings that the adequacy of the forms of support showed when an abused or abuser exhibited some level of commitment to church activities.

The study concluded that spousal violence can be managed among Benin women of Edo State by using the Christian beliefs and doctrines of Pentecostalism.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND THEIR FULL MEANINGS

CDC	Centers for Disease Control
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CGM	Church of God Mission
DLBC	Deeper Life Bible Church
IDI	In-Depth Interview
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
NDHS	National Demographic and Health Survey
OFM	Omega Fire Ministry International
RCCG	Redeemed Christian Church of God
SCOAN	Synagogue Church of All Nations
SOTHA WACA	Society to Heighten Awareness of Women and Children Abuse
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Spousal violence has been on the increase in recent time. Amongst the most celebrated case in Nigeria was the Arowolo's case. Titilayo Arowolo, a 27-year-old mother of one was gruesomely stabbed to death by her husband, Kolade, in their Isolo home in Lagos which resulted in her cold-blooded murder. The public outcry that greeted the incidence was phenomenal as many Nigerians united against this degree of violence and the accused was prosecuted and executed publicly. Titilayo's case was just one among several incidences that occur but most times these incidences go unreported and unheard of. More often than not, spousal violence is shrouded in perpetual silence, this has strengthened and unfettered the occurrence of this social malady.

In Nigeria, Auko & Auko (2007) stressed that many cultures have beliefs, norms and social institutions that legitimize and, therefore, perpetuate gender-based violence. Cultural practices and religious beliefs has mingled to reinforce and strengthen spousal violence. These cultural practices and religious beliefs which are synonymous across the country holds that the man is the head of the house and has the greatest control and decision-making powers in the family. On marriage, the man is expected to pay the bride price to the family of the bride. This payment of bride price has led to the idea of ownership of the woman, the exchange of bride price being evidence of a commercial transaction.

Among the Igbos, cultural subordination manifests itself in male child preference; rigid gender-specific roles; certain marriage and burial customs, including harmful widowhood practices; and exclusion from certain privileges, inheritance entitlements, and rituals like the Kolanut blessing. Similarly, Ezeah (2013) in a study at Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of

Enugu State on the socio economic and cultural processes associated with domestic violence in the rural area noted that violence against women is closely linked to the institution of marriage. Marriage related norms and practices reinforce women's relative powerlessness, often exposing them to domestic violence. Early marriage is generally prevalent in Enugu state.

This picturesque of cultural subordination and women subjugation is evident in other cultures in Nigeria. Likewise, Benin which is the area of this study is the crucible of Pentecostalism in Nigeria (Osezua, 2013a). Outside the church cycles, some Benin cultural practices also promote and lower the status of women. Oghi (2014) highlighted primogeniture, hereditary titles, succession rights to property, and ritual duties passed to the eldest son as customs and traditions which characterized pre-colonial Benin. On hereditary titles, only eldest male children whose mothers were traditionally married to the deceased man had the right to inherit or succeed their fathers subject to satisfactory performance of the necessary rites.

Custom plays significant role in the organization of the family among the Benin people. Within the Benin cultural context, women are considered as strangers in their natal home after marriage, since she is seen as a man's property (Osezua, 2013b). In the same vein, Isibor (2010) argues that a woman is expected to kneel down while presenting her husband with a glass of water or while serving his meals. Such cultural practices and expectations alongside with religious doctrines could affect women's disposition towards spousal violence.

Spousal violence is present in diverse cultures, and households including those with strong religious values (Kroeger and Nason-Clark, 2001). In the literature, spousal violence is defined as a synonym of domestic violence. Aokan (2013) added that domestic violence also mean spousal abuse, domestic abuse, battering family violence, violence against women and intimate partner violence. As an abusive behaviour, it could be perpetrated by one partner against another in an intimate relationship such as marriage, dating family and cohabitation. The most extensively

conducted study on gender violence was the World Health Organization's multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women which involved more than 24,000 women in ten countries around the world. The study revealed that gender based domestic violence seriously affects women's health and the level of violence varied greatly both within and between countries (WHO Summary Report, 2005).

Spousal violence cut across boundaries and borders regardless of social, economic, cultural or religious group. Although, there are some unnoticed cases of violence on men, but the paramount and perplexing effects of this violence is felt by mostly women. It is pertinent to note that violence against women have attracted concerns from international human rights instruments like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth International Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, yet the scourge gathers momentum daily unfettered. Even, a UN resolution designated November 25 as International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. In the same vein, 16 days of activism against violence against women is observed yearly and the campaign designated 'Unite to End Violence against Women' was launched. Despite all these, the violence escalates daily in different households and communities (Gq, 2013; Ine, 2012).

Apart from the fact that most cultures in Nigeria are patriarchal in nature, other factors, such as cultural beliefs, religious values and practices account for the growing silence of women in abusive relationships. In this direction, Nason-Clark (2009) discussed that women in abusive relationships are constrained and silenced by their religious values. The reason given by Nason

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