

Abstract

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND MASCULINITIES: Experiences of Baganda male “survivors” in Masaka District, Uganda

Male intimate partner violence (IPV) victimization by female partners has been one of controversy, with limited research and recognition surrounding its existence, nature and consequences on the male “survivors”. Using a Case study design, this qualitative study examined the lived experiences of eleven (11) Baganda men in Masaka district, who had been subjected to IPV by their female partners and how it affected their masculine identities. In-depth interviews explored the men’s experiences of abuse, how it impacted their masculinity as Baganda men as well as their help-seeking behaviours and experiences when subjected to abuse. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyse interviews with a primary aim of gaining an insight into how each participant made sense of their own personal lived experience of violence. Participant narrative accounts of violence were presented in a cross-case analysis using Johnson's (2008) IPV typology, which included; Situational Couple Violence (SCV), Mutual Violent Control (MVC), and Intimate Terrorism (IT). These typologies adequately described the victimized men’s experiences of subjection to physical aggression, control, verbal, emotional/psychological and sexual abuse by their female intimate partners. The study findings revealed that in intimate relationships where SCV occurred, there was less use of controlling aggression by women, yet it was more prevalent in cases of IT and MVC. For the men who were subjected to IT, the majority of them left the abusive relationship after realizing that they were in great danger unlike the men who were subjected to SCV who decided to remain in the abusive relationship for the reasons they indicated. Men who were victims of MVC were forced to terminate the intimate relationships due to extreme psychological distress. Findings further revealed that the victimized men’s experiences became traumatic over time and negatively affected their physical and emotional well-being. Important to note is that while the men narrated the abusive experiences they encountered, the importance of maintaining a sense of masculinity consistently underpinned their narratives. Some of the abused men described feelings of shame and embarrassment for not meeting the dominant Kiganda cultural expectations surrounding masculinity in heterosexual relationships. Others did not seek help for fear of being judged or not being believed. In addition, some decried the lack of recognition and understanding of male IPV within society. The study recommends a need for advocacy through increased recognition and enhanced public awareness about the plight of male IPV victimization, more gender-inclusive approaches in research, policy and victim service support practices that cater for all IPV victims/survivors regardless of gender.