

Violence against Women, Silent Monster

Imagine a young girl or woman being raped, bruised and battered. She might have to live with the trauma and shame for the rest of her life. Everyday, stories about fathers raping their own daughters, husbands raping their own wives and ladies being raped by strangers. The issue of rape and indeed sexual abuse and violations are considered by several people as mere abstractions. The need to tackle this problem brought about the theme of the summit and the birth of a magazine as the Chief Creative Officer HCDI, Mr. Kingsley Obom-Egbulem had remarked that fathers tend to reinforce self-esteem in their children especially girls and make them to seek a sense of self worth from early sexual experimentation.

He said studies have showed that girls brought up in homes with absentee fathers or fathers who lacked capacity to mentor them are likely to have low self esteem and thus seek for solace in early sexual experimentation and give in to peer pressure. He said they would always want someone else especially, a male colleague or partner to validate them which exposes them to abuse.

"For me I feel it is an indictment on the male when women are raped. They should feel free to move around and aspire to dream, as far as life is concerned. If women cannot live well, dream and are afraid of being battered or bruised then it questions the masculinity of the men. How man enough is those men? Women deserve a better life, it is not about me speaking for women, but I can speak to men to treat women in a better way," he said.

Obom-Egbulem who used the forum to launch a magazine said the journal was about redefining masculinity and changing the society perception about who a man or a father is. "When a man is misbehaving you should be able to know that this is not manhood. Over time you hear women say, that is men for you but no, in the real world, if any man is worth calling a man, then he must

Domestic violence against women is a growing trend in many homes today. The irony of it is that many of the victims don't even want to discuss or complain possibility. This is the reason why many advocates tag it as a silent monster that has been ravaging homes. No one is spared—children, widows and house wives, writes FUNMI OGUNDARE

be man in deed."

He said declaring a state of emergency on violence against women was long overdue because nobody seems to be giving attention to the issue. "We still have the issue of women being beaten by their husbands, it is not going away. Nobody is writing about it and giving it all the attention that it deserves. The woman who has been battered cannot raise healthy children, cannot be the right wife and if she cannot be the right wife, that means who ever she is married to, cannot be happy.

"Even her children cannot be happy and they become dysfunctional. If the woman is not psychologically okay because of the kind of man she married, the children will grow up to be nuisance in the society because their father maltreated their mother. We need to tie up these issues," he added.

A clergyman at the Four Square Gospel Church, Pastor Gbenga Adeoye emphasised the need for the society to speak out on the evils of violence against women so that the necessary solutions could be proffered. He recalled how his adopted daughter was raped by a supposedly man of God, saying that there was a need for fathers to be close to their daughters.

"Every time you have to chastise a child, you have to let them know the reason why you are doing it. If you don't have time for them, you may find out that they could be molested.

The Executive Director, Mediacon, Princess Olufemi-Kayode said the consequences of sexual abuse are horrifying and it demeans the girl-child. She explained that once a child has been sexually abused, she has the potential of being re-abused.

On her part, the Executive Director Project Alert, Mrs. Josephine Chukwuma said most of the problems arising from violence against women were as a result of fathers who are not there for their daughters. She added that though no man was born violent, the society could bring about such vice.



• A woman in agony

"How do you bring up your male child as against your female child? What is it that makes a man; it is all about power and control. No child is born an area girl or boy," she said.

She recalled a case of a 14 years old girl who was sexually abused by her father saying that most times even the mothers are aware of it, but they can not help the situation.

Chukwuma stressed the need for fathers to serve as role models for their daughters and educate them positively by giving them the right information at the right time. It is important.

Director of Publication, The Punch, Mr. Azubuike Isiekwene said the society is patriarchal-based and that most times when a quarrel occurs in the home front, the women are not heard. He added that since the fathers are the role models, there is need to extend the value system to the child by spending more time with their daughters. "You cannot give what you don't have; you have to begin to prepare yourself. We should be very open in your communication," he said.

Isiekwene said mothers too have a role to play in the development of the girl-child and as parents there is the need for them to know how to deal with challenges when they arise.

Participants stressed the need for forums that would enlighten the society on such issues to be organised. This, they said would go a long way in curbing any form of violence against women.

They were of the view that sex education should start from an early age and parent should live exemplary lives that would be worthy of emulation. They noted that men who violate women should be arrested by the police and prosecuted to serve as deterrent to would-be rapist.

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