

Intimate Partner Relationship Violence in Cameroon

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Abstract

Partners in an intimate relationship experienced the good, the bad and ugly moments in Cameroon. This occurs in both formal and informal relationships. Violent abuses among intimate partners have recently been in the limelight in almost all the regions, cities, towns, and villages in Cameroon with Severe effects weighing more on the female partners. These abuses are perpetrated directly or indirectly by a partner in intimate relationship, as a result of suspicion of cheating by partners, heavy alcohol and drug consumption, frustration caused by poverty, and education disparity. This research highlights some of the causes and negative health impact of intimate partner violence on victims in Cameroon. Results suggest that majority of acts of violence perpetrated in intimate relationships in Cameroon are unreported and unrecorded. The paper shall end with conclusion and salient recommendation to better off the situation in Cameroon.

Keywords: *Intimate Partner Relationship, Violence, Abuse, Health Effects*

Introduction

“Wives, submit to your husbands, for that is what you should do as Christians. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them”¹. As clearly cited in the Holy Book, partners in an intimate relationship do not need to act aggressively against each other. Intimate relationships violence remains a major social problem all over the world, Africa, and Cameroon in particular. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) includes a specific target to “eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres.”² Violence against women and girls take place on daily bases in many parts of Cameroon. The root cause of violence in Cameroon is the unequal power relations between females and males, which makes violence a critical gender issue. This ranges from physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence or abuse. Recently, both men and women³ have been victims of these acts of violence.

1 Colossians 3:18-19.

2 <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/> .

3 See Gelles Richard J, Straus, Murray A. (1988), “How violent are American families?”, in Gelles, Richard J. Straus, Murray A. intimate violence: the causes and consequences of abuse in the American family p.104, where they term that the theory that women perpetrate intimate partner at roughly the same rate as men has been termed “gender symmetry”, retrieved website <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/intim>. 5:00pm on 31/12/2019.

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The victimization of men by their women partners in Cameroon is not equally left out as it is a serious social problem, and it is largely ignored by the society⁴. Consequently, male victims do not freely admit being victims of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) at the hands of females⁵. The societal power structure in Cameroon is reflected in the culture of male domination, and men misuse the power they have in their relationships because they have been socialized to believe they have the right to control women, even though violent means. This philosophy of thought has led to the difficulty of believing whether females were even capable of being perpetrators of intimate partner violence and whether females were acting in self-defense from their attackers⁶. Violence is unacceptable and no man deserve to be beaten, sexually abused, or made to suffer emotionally.

Violent abuses among intimate partners have taken a central stage in most urban and rural settings all over Republic of Cameroon especially among couples, ongoing sexual partner, dating or love partners, with severe effect weighing more on the female partners. These violent abuses are perpetrated directly or indirectly by a partner against the other as a result of suspicion of the other partner having multiple partners, alcohol and drug consumption, poverty, education disparity, inability to control women etc. It may take many different forms, be conducted by different perpetrators throughout the lifetime, and have severe direct and indirect health consequences⁷. Violent abuses such as fighting, kicking the other, slapping, violation of private documents, pushing, shaking, throwing things at the respondent, arm twisting, punching with the fist or something else that can hurt, dragging of victim on the street, strangling, violence perpetrated electronically through mobile devices (nude photos and videos being uploaded on social media sites without his or her concern), preventing a person from family and friends or restricting access to information and assistance, hair pulling, burning, and threatening⁸ and/or attacking with a knife, gun, or other type of weapon are perpetrated on daily bases with perpetrators going with little or no punishment. In Cameroon, most of the victims do not report the perpetrators of these violent abuses because they failed to listen to advice of family members, parents, guidance, siblings and close friends when the relationship with a violent partner started. When abused, they are always afraid, reluctant and ashamed to discuss the issue and hence prefers to keep it hidden. Women typically suffer more physical and psychological injuries when victimized by their men partners.

Hence, the problem this paper seeks to address is that majority of these incidents are unreported and unrecorded, though provisions do exist, the methods of implementation and enforceability is very wanting. So, many cases remain unreported, and it will continue to remain behind closed doors as long as the society continues to regard intimate partner relationship violence as normal, or to dismiss it as a

4 Jyoti S., (2013) Domestic Violence against Men, International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR) ISSN (Online): 2319-7064, Vol 5, Available online at www.ijsr.net.

5 Barber C., (2008), Domestic violence against men, Nursing Standard, 22(51), 35-39.

6 In some cases, in Cameroon, men did not report that they have been abused by their intimate partner, particularly because they are afraid of being an object of ridicule. Men and boys are less likely to report the violence and seek services due to the following challenges: the stigma of being a male victim, the fear of not being believed, the denial of victim status, and the lack of support from society, family members, and friends.

7 The Swedish Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority (2010) Child Victims in the Union – Rights and Empowerment (CURE).

8 In Cameroon, abusive partners threaten to take away the life of victims in cases, where they are reported.

private matter. Then men or women continue to suffer gross violations of human right in their dating relationships. Herein, the level of perception of Intimate Partner violence is still low and its tolerance level makes it noticeable only when its outcome involves serious consequences.⁹ This paper highlights some of the available evidence of the causes and effects of intimate partner violence in Cameroon most especially amongst the youths and looking at the legal and institutional mechanisms put in place. This paper also draws on lessons learned from successful interventions to document that works to address IPV and makes policy recommendations for national stakeholders.

Who Is an Intimate Partner?

An intimate¹⁰ partner can be a current or former spouse or non-marital partner, such as a boyfriend, girlfriend, or dating partner. The definition of intimate partner varies between settings and includes formal partnerships, such as marriage, as well as informal partnerships, including dating relationships and unmarried sexual relationships whether cohabiting or not. The term intimate does not automatically translate into romantic, given that friends, siblings, and parent child relations certainly qualify as types of intimacy. The qualifier “partner,” in this context, implies a romantic definition. Hence an intimate relationship is an interpersonal relationship that involves¹¹ physical¹² or emotional intimacy¹³. Therefore, in an intimate relationship there must be caring commitment, interdependence, knowledge, mutuality and trust. Some other factors include self-disclosure is the process of revealing information to else¹⁴. Nonetheless, it is clear from the evidence that the vast majority of those experiencing intimate partner violence and abuse are heterosexual women, and those perpetrating it are heterosexual men and vis versa.

Notion of Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence describes physical violence, sexual violence, and psychological aggression directed against a woman by a current or ex-husband or ex-boyfriend or against a man by a current or ex-wife or ex-girlfriend, or ongoing sexual partner. The term “intimate partner violence” often includes sexual violence and can also include psychological abuse; both these forms of abuse often, but not always, accompany physical violence¹⁵. World Health Organization (WHO) defines Intimate partner violence as “any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and

9 Facilitator’s guide, IEC/BCC Sessions on Gender-based violence, 2010.

10 See section (12) of the Henry Campbell Black, M. A., Black’s Law Dictionary, St. Paul, Minn., West Publishing Co. 1968 4th edition p. 957).

11 https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/intimate_relationship, last accessed 11:45, 14/04/2020.

12 Physical intimacy is characterized by romantic love, sexual activity or other passionate attachment.

13 Emotional intimacy involves feeling of liking or loving one or more people, and may result in physical intimacy.

14 Adalberto Sanchez, (undated) Social Media Use and Intimate Relationships.

15 Rachel J., (2002), Intimate partner violence: causes and prevention, Violence against women III,

controlling behaviours”¹⁶. Intimate partner violence is often systematic and contains parallel physical, sexual and psychological violence. Couples may be dating, cohabiting or married, violence can occur in or outside of the home.

Regulatory Frameworks of IPV in Cameroon

The constitution of Cameroon which gains grounds in academic usage is the 18 January 1996 Law¹⁷, which was revised by the 2008 Law instituting the constitution of Cameroon. This constitution which is the highest law of the land, states that “[e]very person has a right to life, physical and moral integrity and to humane treatment in all circumstances”¹⁸ and that the state “shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law.”¹⁹ From the wordings of this supreme law of Cameroon in its Preamble the right to physical, moral integrity and humane treatment includes the right to be free from violence abuses in intimate partner relationships. Law No. 2016/007 of July 12, 2016, relating to the Penal Code (PC) was adopted and entered into force on July 12, 2016. This act introduces provisions regulating criminal offences and sanctions for murder²⁰, grievous harm²¹, torture²², assault occasioning death²³, assault occasioning grievous harm²⁴, simple harm²⁵, slight harm²⁶, unintentional killing and harm²⁷, rape²⁸, simple threats²⁹, and conditional threats³⁰. These provisions of the PC and other incidental legislations specifically address violence and abuses perpetrated in intimate relationships. It should be born in mind that the Cameroon Criminal Procedure Code (CCPC) defines the procedures to be applied by the PC of Cameroon³¹. Added to this, Cameroon has ratified a number of international treaties relevant to its obligations to prevent and punish acts of violence against women. These treaties and international agreements are

16 Krug, Etienne G., Dahlberg, Linder L., Mercy, James A., Zwi, Anthony B., Lozano, Rafeal (2002) World Report on Violence and Health, Geneva Switzerland, WHOS.

17 Law No. 96/06 of 18 January 1996 instituting the Constitution of Cameroon.

18 Preamble, Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon, 18 January 1996.

19 Part 1, Article 1(2), Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon, 18 January 1996.

20 Section 275 of Penal Code (PC).

21 Section 277 of PC.

22 Section 277(3) of PC.

23 Section 278 of PC.

24 Section 279 of PC.

25 Section 280 of PC.

26 Section 281 of PC.

27 Section 289 of PC.

28 Section 296 of PC.

29 Section 301 of PC.

30 Section 302 of PC.

31 See law No.2005 of 27 July 2005 On the Criminal Procedure Code.

applicable in Cameroon by virtue of article 43³² and 45³³ of the 1996 constitution. Cameroon has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on August 23, 1994. Cameroon has also signed and ratified the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) (African Charter)³⁴ and signed the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Protocol to African Charter).³⁵

Government Institutions Ensuring Women's Right in Cameroon

A special ministry responsible for the promotion of the status of the women and girl children the Ministry of Women's Affairs was created in 1997 because of the special problems of women and the anxiety to improve their status and later changed to the Ministry for the Protection of the Family and the Woman in 2004³⁶. In addressing the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women the Cameroon former Minister of Women Affairs on 26th June 2000 acknowledge the fact that the majority of Cameroon citizens now understood that women had civil as well as human rights and equally understood, violence and Discrimination against women must be eliminated³⁷. In Cameroon, the Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family is responsible for eliminating and preventing violence against women and girls in general, and ensuring and guaranteeing equality for women in all political, economic, social and cultural areas. Within the Ministry, the Department for the Promotion and Protection of the Family and Children's Rights was established in 2012 to strengthen the focus on the protection of children³⁸.

Types of Violent Acts Committed in Intimate Partner Relationships in Cameroon

There are many acts of violence, but the few crucial ones would be reviewed to analyze on the relativity and frequency in Cameroon.

32 The President of the Republic shall negotiate and ratify treaties and international agreements. Treaties and international agreements failing within the area of competence of the Legislative Power as defined in Article 26 above shall be submitted to Parliament for authorization to ratify.

33 Duly approved or ratified treaties and international agreements shall, following their publication, override national laws, provided the other party implements the said treaty or agreement.

34 Signed on July 23, 1987, ratified on June 20, 1989, and deposited on September 18, 1989 by the Republic of Cameroon, according to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

35 Signed on July 25, 2006 but not yet ratified or deposited by the Republic of Cameroon, according to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

36 Teke Johnson T., (undated) Violence against the Women and the Girl Children in Cameroon, Central Bureau for the Census and Population Studies.

37 <https://www.un.org/press/en/2000/20000626.wom1231.doc.html>.

38 The Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family was established in 2004 by virtue of Decree No. 2004/320 of 8 December 2004 on the organization of the Government, which came into force by virtue of Presidential Decree No. 2005/088 of 29 March 2005 on the organization of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Family. The Department for the Promotion and Protection of the Family and Children's Rights was established by Decree No. 2012/638 dated 21 December 2012. Source: Thomson Reuters Foundation's global, 2018, Cameroon: The law and FGM.

Physical Violence

This is an intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing death, injury or harm. It includes, but is not limited to, scratching, pushing, shoving, throwing, grabbing, biting, choking, shaking, poking, hair pulling, slapping, punching, hitting, burning, the use of restraints or one's body size or strength against another person, and the use, or threat to use, weapons³⁹. In some parts of Cameroon especially the Centre and South regions, some people claim that beating the woman is a sign of deep affection and beating the woman is generally more accepted in these regions than other regions of Cameroon⁴⁰. Male partners in some relationship claim that beating their female partner makes them even more attached and faithful in their relationships⁴¹. This goes against Article 5 of ACHPR which provide for the right to the respect of the dignity inherent in a human being and equally prohibits all forms of exploitation and degradation of man particularly slavery, slave trade, torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment and treatment⁴².

Sexual Violence

This is any non-consensual sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.' Sexual assault is a continuum from forcible rape to non-physical forms of pressure that compel individuals to engage in sex against their will. Sexual assault takes many forms within relationships, including marital, date, and acquaintance rape. The Cameroon Penal Code goes further to punish those guilty of rape with imprisonment for from 5 (five) to 10 (ten) years⁴³. Three central elements characterize legal definitions of rape: lack of consent; penetration, no matter how slight or independent of whether ejaculation occurred; and compelling participation by force, threat of bodily harm, or with a person incapable of giving consent due to intoxication or mental incapacitation⁴⁴. Husbands or male partners forced female partners to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to at some point in their relationship. Recent studies have shown that female partners are not free from these acts as they compel the male partners to engage in sexual activities against their will.

39 See the case of a lady accused of having stabbed to near death her husband in a bid to free herself from beatings of her husband. Source: Nfor Handson N., (2020), "Victims of domestic violence, she acts", Cameroon News Agency, facebook page.

40 Teke Johnson T., supra.

41 Following a close interview with some of the victims in Cameroon, the few of them prefers to hide the perpetrators of the act, and only feels comfortable sharing the unfortunate incidence to those they believed and have confident that they wouldn't share to any third party. It is common to see woman or lady with red face or a broken limb which shows most have been hurt by a violent partner, when asked she will tell you she had an accident.

42 See the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights Adopted in Nairobi June 27, 1981 Entered into Force October 21, 1986.

43 Section 296 of the PC.

44 Intimate Partner Abuse and Relationship Violence Working Group (undated), Intimate Partner Abuse and Relationship Violence.

Psychological Violence

Any act or omission that damages the self-esteem, identity or development of the individual or behaviour that is intended to intimidate and persecute, and takes the form of threats of abandonment or abuse, confinement to the home, surveillance, threats to take away custody of the children, destruction of objects, isolation, verbal aggression and constant humiliation. Psychological abuse refers to: acts such as degradation, humiliation, intimidation and threats of harm; intense criticizing, insulting, belittling, ridiculing, uploading private photos on social media sites and name calling that have the effect of making a person believe they are not worthwhile and keep them under the control of the abuser; verbal threats of abuse, harm, or torture directed at an individual, the family, children, friends. Psychological abuse includes controlling and coercive behaviours that reduce freedom and result in micro-management of everyday life. Controlling behaviour describes a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by: isolating them from sources of support; exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain; depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape; and regulating their everyday behaviour. Coercive behaviour describes an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim⁴⁵

Economic Exploitation

This refers to causing or attempting to cause an individual to become financially dependent on another person, by obstructing her or his access to, or control over, resources and/or independent economic activity' or 'acts such as the denial of funds, refusal to contribute financially, denial of food and basic needs, and controlling access to health care, employment.⁴⁶ Economic violence equally involves restricting access to resources such as bank accounts, spending money, funds for household expenses, telephone communication, transportation, or medical care. Preventing a woman from shopping independently or from working outside the home are considered forms of economic abuse⁴⁷

Understanding the Causes of Intimate Partner Violence in Cameroon

Violence occurs in all socioeconomic groups and it is used as a strategy in conflict. The causes of violence may differ in individual relationships, thus, this paper highlight those which are the most frequent.

Poverty

Poverty is a situation in an economy where people cannot meet up with basic necessities of life such as nutrition, clothing, home and access to portable water. Poverty has been one of the causes of intimate partner violence in the world and most especially in developing countries and Cameroon in particular. Since poverty is inherently stressful, it has been argued that IPV may result from stress and that poorer

45 Eileen Scott, (2015) A brief guide to intimate partner violence and abuse, NHS Health Scotland.

46 www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/347-glossary-of-terms-from-programming-essentials-and-monitoring-and-evaluation-sections.html.

47 Eileen Scott, Ibid, p. 20.

men have fewer resources to reduce stress⁴⁸. Inability to provide ones needs exacerbate the rate of violence in intimate relationship. Looking at the case of Cameroon, there is a high rate of unemployment couple with low per capital income. These factors have exacerbated the level of violent behaviour among dating partners which at times leads to homicide or suicide of either of the parties or both⁴⁹. Due to this, partners turn to exercise their level of frustrations on fellow partners by abusing and assaulting them violently.

Alcohol and Drug Consumption

Alcohol and drug consumption is one of the push factors for IPV in Cameroon. This is due to the fact that the consumption rate of alcohol in Cameroon is very high. Thus, men (and often women) are more likely to act violently when drunk or drug because they do not feel they will be held accountable for their behaviour. Male, who do not drink or take less alcohol, had a lower risk of experiencing sexual violence compared to males who drink alcohol even though this also did not reach statistical significance. Herein the exact relationship between alcohol and violence remains unclear; researchers have consistently found drinking patterns to be related to intimate partner and sexual violence⁵⁰. Severe drinking problems increase the risk for lethal and violent victimization of women in intimate partner relationships⁵¹. Alcohol may have an exacerbating effect within a relationship where abusive behaviour already exists or that abuse may increase alcohol use in victims. Women's alcohol consumption is significantly related to male-to-female and female-to-male physical violence. In Cameroon partners have described using alcohol in a premeditated manner to enable them to assault their partner because they feel that this is socially expected of them. Heavy alcohol and drug consumption by men (and often women) most at time results to violent abuses such as rape, assault, beating and false accusation, according to WHO reports, Cameroon total per capita alcohol consumption is at 8.9 litres which is significantly above the average for the WHO African region. About half (51.8%) of alcohol consuming youth between the age 15 to 19 years in Cameroon engage in binge alcohol consumption⁵². The Cameroon government in other to curtail this high consumption rate has increase taxes for alcohol and tobacco to limit consumption of these harmful substances, prevent related harm and boost revenue⁵³.

48 Rachel J. supra.

49 See the case of Akawung Franka who was stabbed to death by her boyfriend whom she had a love relationship with for five (5) years. The story goes that, he stabbed because he found out that, she had a relationship with another man, retrieved website <http://cameroonnewsagency.com> , accessed on the 24th June 2020.

50 Oladepo, Yusuf O.B and Arulogun O.S, (2011) Factors Influencing Gender Based Violence among Men and Women in Selected States in Nigeria, African Journal of Reproductive Health December.

51 <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/causes-and-consequences-intimate-partner-violence>. Last accessed 19 January 2021.

52 WHO Global Status Report 2018.

53 <https://movendi.ngo/news/2020/07/01/cameroon-governments-plans-alcohol-tax-increase/>.

Educational Disparity

Cameroon is among the countries that are committed to implementing universal primary and secondary education, which is one of the recommendations for the United Nations for the twenty-first century. But the reality is far from these goals, 70% of Cameroonian girls are illiterate⁵⁴. This phenomenon is especially visible in the north region of Cameroon. Educational disparity couple with low socioeconomic status of either partner within a relationship can be linked to higher levels of intimate partner violence and abuse, especially where women or men possess a higher level of education than their partner. A low level of education in Cameroon is linked to both perpetration and victimization⁵⁵. The conflict-ridden and violent relationships that girls have with their peers may cause them to become depressed and gives them a more negative self-image⁵⁶. All of this discourages many girls from continuing their studies. In Cameroon, men with fewer years of education are more likely to report perpetrating physical, sexual, economic and psychological violence. Women who had post-secondary education are significantly less likely to report experiencing physical and sexual abuse by their partner. Women with more education than their spouses are more likely to report ever and recent violence. Lower education reduces access to resources and potentially increases acceptance of violence and unequal gender norms.

Intimate Relationship Squabbles

Human beings often experience conflict when they are in a dating or love relationship especially when it comes to agreeing or disagreeing on certain issues. This usually leads to physical, sexual or psychological abuse⁵⁷. In major cities in Cameroon, partners in an intimate relationship most often have dowry disputes, unauthorized or forced access to private information on phones and monitoring of partners calls, female sterilization, women or men having multiple partners or extra marital activities⁵⁸ and drinking alcohol (arguing about their partner's drinking altitude). Given that most IPV emerges out of relational conflict, men with multiple sexual partners⁵⁹ are more likely to perpetrate intimate partner violence and abuse.

54 Salomon M., (undated) The under-education of girls in Cameroon, available online at <https://www.humanium.org/en/the-under-education-of-girls-in-cameroon/>, last visited 07:00 P.M., 11/04/2020.

55 Eileen S., *supra*.

56 Salomon M., *ibid*.

57 See the case of Cameroonian couple in Equatorial Guinea by names Gerald and Jackline where the couples are suffering from serious injuries they inflicted on each other. It is reported that the wife boiled a pot of water mixed with pepper and salt and poured on her husband while the latter was asleep because the wife accused her husband of having extramarital affairs. The husband got up and pounced on Jackline beating her violently causing her to lose three teeth. Available online at <https://mimimefoinfos.com> last accessed January 15 2021.

58 Mimi mefo report on the case of an Engineer by name Kenfack Martin who reported got heartbroken after realizing that his wife by name Clemence, had reportedly been involved in an extra-marital affair. So when Kenfack realized his wife was expecting a set of twins for another man who got her pregnant, he threw himself down a storey building in Australia. Retrieved website <https://mimimefoinfos.com>, last accessed January 30th 2021.

59 Mimi Mefo report on the case of a 21-year-old girl by name Lizette who was allegedly killed by her boyfriend after he found out she had affair with another man abroad. The corpse was discovered on Sunday the 25th of May 2020, available online at <https://mimimefoinfos.com/body-of-21year-old-girl-found-in-buea-hostel/> .

Both multiple partnership and perception of infidelity (by female partners) are strongly associated with both the perpetration and experience of intimate partner violence and abuse or sexual violence. Hence male and female who believe that using abusive behaviour in a relationship is acceptable are more likely to be subjected to violence against the other. It stands to reason that more competent management of ordinary conflicts may have the potential for preventing such violence or attenuating the negative effects of such violence when it does occur.

Availability of different Social Networking Sites (SNS)

SNS refers to any website that allows for social communication and exchange of ideas⁶⁰. SNS can include sites like Facebook, photo/video-sharing sites like Instagram and YouTube, and blogging sites like Tumblr and email⁶¹. Mobile technology, such as cell phones, has become an important part of daily life in Cameroon with 82.9% of Cameroonians connected to the internet through their mobile phones⁶². As of January 2020, 7.8 million people⁶³ were connected to the internet in Cameroon to a report Hootsuite and we are social⁶⁴ baptized Digital 2020 Cameroon. This report released to the public reveals that of the 3.5 million followers, 58.8% are men, compared to 41.2% women. The presence of SNS have brought more harm than good in our society as far IPV is concern. This is because the present of mobile device caused connection and communication to decrease and turns to diminished feelings of closeness among romantic partners. Equally more intimate or negative post of partners exposed on social media decree relationships. The exposure of young person's to violence through media, and within their families and communities, desensitizes them to its occurrence. The normalization and cultural tolerance of violence in the media that adolescents consume encourages them to believe that dating violence is acceptable⁶⁵

The Upshots of Violence in Intimate Relationships

Nowadays, IPV is recognized as a serious problem, which affects the personal and familial well-being. General knowledge about this phenomenon has increased over the years, therefore, it is expected that the number of victims who look for help become more. The negative outcomes of IPV cannot be neglected.

60 O'keeffe G., Clarke-Pearson K. & Council on Communications and Media (2011), The impact of social media on children, adolescents and families. *Pediatrics*, 124, 800-804.

61 Subrahmanyam K., & Greenfield P., (2008), Online communication and adolescent relationships. *The Future of Children*, 18(1), Princeton University P.p 119-146.

62 www.crtv.cm/2020/02/social-media-networks-cameroon-counts-over-8-million-users/.

63 <https://www.businessincameroon.com>.

64 Organisations that monitor internet and social media feed Cameroon.

65 Jan Wagstaff, MA, MSW, (2018) *Intimate Partner Violence in Adolescence*, Cinahl Information Systems.

Frequent Alcohol and Drug Consumption

Alcohol consumption is an important facilitator of men's use of violence. Women may drink alcohol to cope with the series of abuse, but, conversely, women's consumption of alcohol may result in abuse from their partners in a relationship. In Cameroon most partners in violent relationships consume alcohol or smoke cigarettes because they believe the more they drink and smoke, the more they are being relieved from their stress. Frequent alcohol consumption leads to wastage of resource as finances which could have been allocated to different things is been spent in buying those expensive drinks. Regular alcohol and drug intake together have an even greater cancer risk in the mouth, throat, esophagus, colon, or liver⁶⁶

Induced Abortion

Violent relationships are frequently marked by fear and controlling behaviours by partners⁶⁷. In Cameroon female partners in these relationships report more adverse sexual and reproductive health outcomes. This is due to sexual violence perpetrated by violent partners. All these are as a result of inability to negotiate birth control and the use of condom for fear of violence. This leads to unintended pregnancies which are usually terminated via illegal or unsafe abortion. In Cameroon abortion is punishable by the penal code.⁶⁸ This results to greater health impact on the part of the woman which can lead to the destruction of her womb or even death.

Transmission of HIV/AIDs and Other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Partner violence or abuse contributes to greater risk of contracting HIV and STIs. This is usually as a result of direct infection from forced sexual intercourse and absence of negotiation on the use of condoms or other preventive means. At a global level, women in some regions (e.g. sub-Saharan Africa) are more than 1.5 times more likely to develop an HIV infection, 1.6 times more likely to develop syphilis and 1.8 times more likely to become infected with chlamydia or gonorrhoea⁶⁹. Being in a violent relationship can greatly affects the health and well-being of partners, children and community. This kind of stress can worsen illness, and depression, and increase substance abuse and absence from work leading to trauma on the victim.

66 Elaine k. Luo M.D., Ann Pietrangelo (2018) Effects of Alcohol on your Body, health line. Retrieved website <https://www.healthline.com/health/alcohol/effect-on-body>. Last accessed 21 January 2021, 8:40 PM.

67 WHO, (2013) Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence.

68 See sections 337 (1,2,3,4) of the PC. The law provides for both fine and imprisonment of up to 1 (one) year against any woman procuring or consenting to her own abortion. Thus anyone who procures the abortion of a woman without her consent shall not be free from these sanctions. The law goes as far as ordering the closure of premises of those who practices the profession of medicine and imposes a ban on the occupation.

69 Eileen S., supra.

Homicide and Suicide

IPV often led to the death of one or both partners as a result of the actions of the other⁷⁰. This can be in the form of physical, psychological or sexual used of violence. At times a partner ends up committing suicide⁷¹ due to depressing or violent act perpetrated upon him or her by the other person. This results to the killing of a partner⁷² either by using a weapon or any other means. Fear of losing or suspicion of a partner is usually one of the push factors of these violent abuses in intimate relations. Victims of partner violence experience more operative surgeries, visits to doctors and hospital stays throughout their lives than those without a history of abuse. In Cameroon, eighteen years old (18) Patricia stabbed to death twenty two (22) years old Andre with a knife because the victim reportedly called off the relationship but Patricia could not swallow the bitter pill and so decided to revenge by putting an end to his life⁷³. See also the case of Oscar Pistorius who murdered his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp in February 2013 in South Africa⁷⁴.

Homelessness of Female Victims or Survivors

This is a very major problem as victims or survivors of intimate partner violence especially women and children most often are faced with the problem of housing after when they choose to leave or sent away by a violent or an abusive partner. In recent times there has been an increased in the number of homeless in major cities in Cameroon, indirectly calling for an emergency response of humanitarian action such as accommodation and provision of shelter to these people.

Impact on Children

There is a lack of consistency regarding the term exposure, this can include children who are witness to, or directly experience abuse. It also encompasses a spectrum from one-off incidents to chronic, recurring exposure. This can include, overhearing abuse, observing abuse or the consequences of abuse, intervening during abuse, being held 'hostage' by perpetrator of abuse. In infants, exposure is associated with poor

70 Mac Walter Njapteh, (2021), "Married soldier allegedly kills, buries girlfriend", The Guardian Post, 14 January, P.5.

71 Report on the case of a Cameroonian in U.S who killed himself after he had taken the life of his wife on June 14 in Ohio. Source Dillian Welleng, (2020), "Cameroonian kills wife, commits suicide in US", The Guardian Post, 16 June, p. 2. Equally see the case of 17-year-old girl who attempts suicide as boyfriend dumps her in Ebolowa, the Guardian post report, 2020. Also, see the report by Nfor Hanson N. about a 35-year-old lady who committed suicide in Moloundou, Bumba and Ngoka division in the East region after the supposed boyfriend dumped her for another woman. She consumed rat poison and died upon learning that her lover with whom she has been for five years was getting married to another woman without her knowledge. Available online at <http://cameroonnewsagency.com/>.

72 See the case of man who butcher's wife and son, in Yaounde and burnt parts of their bodies and made away with their legs. Dillian Welleng, (2020), "Man butcher's family, in Yaounde burns corpses", The Guardian Post, 22nd June, p.2. see also the case of a 27-year-old man by name Bryant Formbor Fabo who was brutally murdered in the early hours of June 6. Reported by Queen Nzefeh, (2020), "alleged love affair", The Guardian Post, 9 June, p. 2.

73 Dillian Welleng, (2020) '18-year-old girl stabs boyfriend to death in Mbalmayo', The Guardian Post, 17 January, p.1. See also Source Mimi Mefo info, facebook page 15/01/2020 and Equinox Tv 6pm prime time news.

74 www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34993002 access 23/01/2020 at 07:45. see also TVC new hour, 2014.

health, sleep, excessive crying and screaming. In children it is associated with a range of difficulties including increased levels of fear, anxiety, stigma, aggressive behaviours, sleeping problems and poor social competence, verbal skills and school performance. Children exposed to intimate partner violence and abuse, whether or not they are directly abused, are more likely to either experience or perpetrate as adults.

Discussion

This paper explored the causes of intimate partner violence and types of intimate partner abuse and the possible consequences of sustaining IPV in love relationships in Cameroon. Violent acts in formal and informal relationships have been on a rise in recent time in the republic of Cameroon most especially in intimate relationship. It is common to hear of partners fighting against each other. High unemployment in Cameroon and the quest of individual wants has caused most of the ladies in love relationship to have multiple partners. These have had an adverse effect in most relationships leading to ugly scenes such as death and suicide of victims. Partners who undergo these unfortunate circumstances keep it secret to spare themselves of the shame usually associated to this.

In intimate relationships in Cameroon, partners experience the following rights violations;

- Partner prevented from leaving the house, seeing friends (he/she tell you who you can be friends with) and family, getting a job (it can affect a woman's earnings, job performance and her ability to keep a job), or continuing your education.
- Partner using weapons, alcohol, or drugs.
- Partner forced to have sex when he or she didn't want to. At times one force the other to engage in sex that makes a partner feels uncomfortable, making her watch pornographic material against her wishes.
- Partners who are jealous, accuses each other of being unfaithful, suspicious of his/her activities, control most or all of the daily activities, do not allow the other to make phone calls, or have money without his or her approval.
- Partner hitting the other most especially male partner, slapping, kicking, pushing, punching, pulling hair or in some other way hurt their dating partners.
- Partners verbally or physically abusive (threatened or abused your children) that is to say insulting things or threatened.
- A partner beats up the other so badly that he or she must seek medical help.
- Partner uploading private messages and information (nude photos and videos) of the other without his or her approval on social media sites or in public.
- Psychological abuse is humiliating in private, insisting on knowing where he or she is going and being angry if she talks to another man or woman (if respondent had a female or male partner).

Conclusion

IPV is an issue which calls for much concern in Cameroon as victims or survivor partners are being abused on daily bases in different ways and just little is done because the greater part of the population considers it as a private matter and most of these cases are unreported or unrecorded. This has great implications for the general wellbeing of partners in a love relationship as it affects all spheres of lives. Intervention strategies such as public enlightenment on the effects of IPV on both women and men in all relationships should be carried out. In addition, pre-marital counseling and conflict resolution strategies especially among couples, dating partners and youths in education milieu and on different social media platforms should be strongly intensified to ameliorate the situation. If women, girls, men and boys are not safe, they cannot be full citizens nor fully participate in the development of their own society, thus government vision of Cameroon emergence by 2035 will not be fully realized. They should have access to collection and analysis of forensic evidence for those women who choose to follow a judicial procedure. The paper recommends that, the government can improve identification and disclosure of victims through self-reporting, provision of free national telephone helpline, indirect measure to ask women, friend, neighbours, and family members if they know anyone else who has experienced violence. The WHO suggests that the best way to measure women's exposure is through household surveys that take measures to protect women's safety⁷⁵. There should be a change attitudes and improve practice (for example, willingness to intervene in a bystander situation). Promoting healthy relationships in younger age groups is key to preventing violence and destructive patterns of behaviour.

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