

Why more men will be killed by their wives –Investigation



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Out of sheer desperation and impatience with what many see as the Nigerian government's failure to protect women, there is a growing base of women who feel the need to protect themselves to end the persistent battering and even killing of wives by their husbands. CHIJOKE IREMEKA reveals how women are fighting back to reinstate their rights

Recently, the Niger State Police Command arrested a 14-year-old wife, Aisha Isah, who allegedly clubbed her 40-year-old husband to death after five months of marriage out of frustration and retaliation to uninterrupted abuse to her womanhood.

The police said Aisha, who was forced by her parents to marry one Isiaka Usman, from Lifari village in the Mashegu Local Government Area of Niger State against her wish, will be prosecuted as a juvenile offender.

Prior to the tragedy, she had been complaining to her parents that Usman, who already had two wives before marrying her, had been starving and maltreating her, pleading with her parents to take her out of Usman's house but her parents declined to grant her request.

Aisha, who acted allegedly in self defense, said her late husband had the habit of not giving her and her co-wives money for food and each time the wives confronted him, he would tell them to go to their respective parents' houses and eat.

But when she could no longer bear the frustration, dejection, emotional, physical assault and battery, she took laws into her own hands, resisted the man's beating and fought back with a pestle, which ended in tragedy.

"He had been starving me, and for four days, he refused to give me food, and when I confronted him, he slapped me. Out of anger, I hit him on the forehead with a pestle and he collapsed and died. It wasn't intentional. I regret my actions.

"I am sorry for what happened; it is the devil's work and I pray my parents will forgive me. I never knew that he would die, I regret all my actions," she stated.

This is the plight typical of many women who are coerced into a marriage against their wishes, or being maltreated or abused in their husbands' houses. Out of their frustration to shake off the shackles of the abusive relationships they are into, by fighting back – often their husbands become the casualties.

"Women are weaker vessels and in most cases, they act on impulse. The next moment, they are full of regrets, but then, the damage has been done. They are fighting back to make up for many years of

being battered, killed, verbally and emotionally abused by their intimate male counterpart. In most cases, their retaliations are tragic. Few others fight legally,” said former Director, Inspectorate, Federal Ministry of Education, Lagos, Dr. Nkem Okolo, who is also the Chief Coordinator, The Wife.

It is against this background that the relationship and marriage counsellor warned that more men will be killed intentionally or accidentally if imposition of strange women in their lives and vice versa continues unabated.

Sunday Telegraph learnt that such is the major reason for tragic end of most husbands and until the anomaly stops, and abuse of wives by their husbands, whether physically, emotionally or verbally, more men will be victims of spousal killings.

According to some legal practitioners, since Nigerian law does not prohibit spousal or intimate partner abuse, and there is no punishment meted out for spouse abusers, many people in their frustration and helplessness will take laws into their hands, thereby leading to more casualties.

The Principal Partner, Benon Chambers and Co., and president of Igboekulie, Barr Ben Onuora, had earlier said that spousal abuse is not a crime in the Nigerian Constitution, though the rights activists are pushing towards criminalising domestic violence in Nigeria.

“Domestic violence is not a crime in Nigeria legally speaking. Before you say something is a crime, there should be a punishment prescribed for the offenders. But as it is, there is no section of the Nigeria constitution that criminalises domestic violence. But this is not what we should encourage anyway.

“Domestic violence in Nigeria is something that should be discouraged as an evil. But legally speaking, nobody can say it's against the provision of any section in the constitution instead, the only known crime is battery and in some cases, the domestic

violence that falls within battery can be judged on that. If anybody feels otherwise, he should quote the punishment for domestic violence in Nigeria,” he argued.

Sunday Telegraph observed that Nigeria lacks statistics as regards domestic violence against the men, but in the United Kingdom, statistical bulletins and the British Crime Survey show that men make up about 40 per cent of domestic violence victims each year.

Figures suggest that as many as one in three victims of domestic violence are male, yet men are often reluctant to report abuses by women because they feel embarrassed, or fear that they won't be believed, or worse, that the police will assume that since they are male, they are the perpetrators of the violence and not the victim.

Whereas women who experience domestic violence are openly encouraged to report it to the authorities. It has been argued that men who experience such violence often encounter difficulties in making this known to the right authorities.

In Turkey, for instance, at least, 281 women were killed by men, an increase of 30 per cent from the previous year and this led to regrouping of some women to fight back, teaching women martial arts and shooting exercises.

So, out of sheer desperation and impatience with what many see as the Nigerian government's failure to protect women, there is a growing base of women who feel the need to protect themselves to end persistent killing of women by their husbands.

The women are wielding the big stick in the domestic arena against the men after many years of being put down, pushed and punched. They have used and are still using different approaches deemed fit to them to retaliate.

“We are not saying chase after people who threaten you, find them and kill them, no, but we are just saying, if they attack you, protect yourself,” said Mrs. Ulasi Blessing, one of the victims of spousal domestic violence.

“It’s a matter of empowering women. If a woman has the ability and the capacity in terms of economic, psychological, and social among others to leave their husband, she can stop the violence...” she added.

In most developed countries of the world with female-friendly legislations, women fight back through the courts to regain their freedom from spousal abuse. But in Africa, including Nigeria, the reverse is the case as almost none of them approaches the court for such.

Those who do not approach courts resort to fighting back with women’s ‘kitchen gun’ – pestle – a wooden object used for pounding yam into paste and process cassava into fufu. In most cases, their reactions to their husbands’ actions often lead to death of the husbands.

This was the case of a young man in Ibadan who was clubbed to death by his abused wife while he was fast asleep. Such was a pitiable death as the young man wasn’t given the opportunity to fight for his survival.

A 65-year-old retired civil servant, Emmanuel Osuya, recently prayed a Customary Court in Igando, Lagos, to dissolve his 28-year-old marriage over allegations of physical abuse by his wife.

Osuya stunned the court and all those present in April this year, when he told the judge that his wife, Abigail Osuya, 45, had turned him into a punching bag, beating him up at the slightest provocation.

According to Osuya, his life had become threatened on account of his wife's aggressive and violent nature, saying he wasn't interested in the marriage anymore as he doesn't want to die.

"My wife wants to kill me; she beats me almost every day with dangerous weapons. On three occasions, she actually broke my leg, preventing me from going out for days," he said.

Others who would rather not fight, resorted to using poisonous substances to settle the matter permanently. When this happens, the case of young wife, who got married to her husband at 14, comes to mind.

The young wife was being maltreated and abused. So she needed to end that abusive relationship once and for all by poisoning her husband's food. Her husband ate the food and died.

In another instance, a 15-year-old housewife, Dausiya Abdulmuminu, who was arrested by the Katsina Police Command for allegedly poisoning her husband, Samilu Usman, said she was betrothed to her late husband by her uncle and never loved the man.

She said: "I bought rat poison for N40 which I put inside the rice and beans which I served him. He ate the food and died alongside an eight-year-old, Mohammed Abdulmumini, who ate with him."

According to her, the late husband was involved in a car accident two weeks after the wedding, a development, she claimed, made him to suffer mental imbalance.

Worse still, she said her pregnancy wasn't for the late husband, rather for her boyfriend. The Commissioner of Police, Katsina State, Beseng Gwana, said Dausiya would soon be arraigned in court for alleged culpable homicide by poisoning.

Other fragment part call on family members to fight their husbands but this has always led to separation of the spouses.

A petty trader, Mrs. Ngozi Ajie, who called on her siblings to help fight her husband 12 years ago, is still in her father's house as her husband had married another wife. The new wife had cemented her stay in the man's house as she had given him the male child he was looking for.

Some use 'bedroom weapon', sex denial, as punishment to retaliate what the husband has done to her or switching her love to another man, perhaps, earlier boy friend or new one to get back at the husband. But like the above group, this also leads to relationship break up.

"The system of arranged marriage, which worked in the past is not working anymore. This is because many people are now empowered and given voice to speak for themselves and go for what they want. It's therefore suicidal for a man to be imposed on a woman who doesn't loves him. Such a man is sitting on a keg of gunpowder," Dr. Irriruaga Edefe.

Ogunlade: Domestic abuse is not limited to violence

Relationship expert, Bidemi Ogunlade, explained that domestic abuse is not limited to violence, saying that an abusive wife or partner may hit, kick, bite, punch, spit, throw things, or destroy your possessions.

She noted that for women to make up for any difference in strength, she may attack the man while asleep or otherwise catch him by surprise.

Ogunlade said: "She may also use a weapon, such as a gun or knife; or strike you with an object; or abuse or threaten your children. Your spouse or partner may also try to control how you spend money, where you go or what you wear; act jealously or be possessive or constantly accuse you of being unfaithful. She may also verbally abuse you, belittle you, or humiliate you in front of friends, colleagues, family, or on social media."

She added that women who abuse men are not much different from their male counterparts who abuse women.

An abused man, she said, faces a shortage of resources, skepticism from police, and major legal obstacles, especially when it comes to gaining custody of his children from an abusive mother.

“Our culture still clings to narrow definitions of gender. Young boys are taught not to express their emotions, but to ‘suck it up’ and ‘be a man.’ To this end, men may feel discouraged to talk about what is going on in their personal lives, or feel like no one will believe them,” she pointed out,” she added.

However, the National Secretary of the Committee for Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), Yinka Folarin, said domestic violence against men must be placed on the same pedestal with that of women. It is equal rights for us or special privileges to none when it comes to rights’ violation; so the right for women to seek redress is equally applicable to men as well.

“I don’t see anything to be ashamed of in a man reporting an incident of abuse. There is no shame in taking the lawful process in seeking redress; such men should cultivate the habit of seeking redress,” he said, adding that men who are abused should not continue to suffer in silence but seek redress through appropriate legal instruments.

According to him, CDHR which is a human rights organisation, treats every issue that falls within human rights violation; so the men also have where they can go to any day any time. But the reason women issues get more focus is because of the rate of domestic violence against them.

“An offence is an offence, no matter who commits it. Therefore, men should not keep quiet whenever they go through domestic violence from their wives,” he added.