Theatre for development as a competent vehicle for the eradication of domestic violence against women

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Abstract

Apparently, domestic violence is one of the burning social issues of global concern. In many countries of the world, including Nigeria, reports and news of how several women have been abused by their intimate partners have occupied major parts of the mass media in recent times. Often, this ugly trend causes psychological and bodily harm, and even loss of life for the victims who are majorly women and children. In fact, the negative implications of domestic violence on the victims and society in general cannot be over emphasised. Hence, the need to fight against the menace is sacrosanct. However, a number of theatre scholars like Paulo Fiere, Augusto Baol, James Atu Alachi amongst others seem to agree that theatre for development is a viable instrument for social control, behavioural change and socio-political and economic development. This paper, therefore, explores the potency of theatre for development in the fight against the aforementioned social ills. The paper adopts descriptive survey instrument of the qualitative methodology to gather and analyse its data. Among other things, the result reveals that domestic violence has negative effects on its victims and the society in general. The result also shows that theatre for development is one of the veritable tools that can be used to eradicate domestic violence issues in the society. Thus, the paper concludes and suggests that theatre for development should be employed to address the prevailing issues of domestic violence in Nigeria for sustainable national development.

Keywords: Theatre, Development, Eradication, Domestic, Violence

Introduction

In recent times, issues of domestic violence against women have been a common occurrence globally. Across many countries of the world, women have experienced physical, emotional and sexual abuses. In Nigeria, the case has not been different. In other words, like other parts of the world, domestic violence against women is one of the major social realities confronting Nigerian women. Over the years, many Nigerian women have witnessed different domestic violence and abuses such as battery, rape, beating and consequently, death. Different scholars have attributed the factors for this ugly situation to a number of things. According to Djaden and Thoennes:

. . . in the United States of America, each year, women experience about 4.8 million intimate partner-related physical assaults and rapes while men are victims of about 2.9 million intimate partner related physical assaults. In parts of the third world generally and in West Africa, in particular, domestic violence is prevalent and reportedly justified and condoned in some cultures. For instance, 56% of Indian women surveyed by an agency justified wife-beating on grounds like – bad cook, disrespectful to in-laws, producing more girls, leaving home without
Musa Salifu and Yunusa Musa: Theatre for development as a competent vehicle for the eradication of domestic violence against women

informing, among others. (1)

Aihinie’s opinion above, no doubt, captures one of the major factors responsible for the prevailing issues of domestic violence in Africa, and Nigeria in particular. A number of the nation's cultural systems seem to promote enslavement of women; a situation where women are culturally constrained through the use of certain cultural principles and abusive punishments to accept laws made by men and society even though such law violate their fundamental rights. Many of these women often do not voice out their plights, perhaps, due to the fact that there exist no proper legal structure that protect women facing domestic violence and abuses in the country. This may be the reason it has been observed that:

. . . Nigerian society is basically patriarchal and women’s place within the scheme is decidedly subordinate. Domestic violence therefore functions as a means of enforcing conformity with the role of a woman within customary society. . . Violence against women in the home is generally regarded as belonging to the private sphere in Nigeria and is therefore shielded from outside scrutiny. A culture of silence reinforces the stigma attached to the victim rather than condemning the perpetrator of such crimes. (Afrol News, Pag:12)

However, it is important to acknowledge the fact that domestic violence has negative effects on the victims and the society in general. For instance, victims of domestic violence are usually depressed as a result of the physical harm inflicted on them, and the psychological effects that normally accompanied such condition. On the other hand, "Growing up in an abusive environment is what makes a person find the sight of a suspect being beaten or burnt to death, entertaining and enjoyable. It is what makes the youth happy and excited about being thugs for wicked politicians. Domestic violence gives rise to a violent society because ‘charity begins at home’" (Aihie, 5). Hence, the need to search and research about the means to eradicate the menace is sacrosanct. It is based on this backdrop that this paper interrogates the potency of theatre for development in addressing the aforementioned problem.

Theoretical Framework
Theory of reason action
This study is based on theory of reason action. This theory was propounded by Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen in 1980. Among other things, it focuses on the factors that influence behaviour. According to the theory, there is a link between beliefs, attitudes, intentions and behaviour of an individual. In other words, it emphasises on the fact that the attitude of a person is determined by his beliefs on the consequences of behaviour multiplied by his evaluation of these consequences.

The implication of this theory for our study is that there is a strong link between its statement and one of the core principles of theatre for development which is changing the mind sets of a people for self-realization, collective actions and development. One of the major causes of domestic violence, according to Aihie, “include traditions and norms within African traditional culture that regard wife battering as normal” (6). Theatre for development both in theory and practice, like reason action theory, strives to provide a communication framework based on
dialogue and empowerment to facilitate balanced sharing of knowledge that can influence people's attitude and behaviour for sustainable socio-economic progress.

**Concept of Domestic Violence**
Domestic violence constitutes the various forms of abusive and violent behaviours that are found particularly in intimate partner's relationship. It can also be viewed as the use of abusive acts such as battery, sexual abuse and physical assault by one intimate partner against another often, to gain power and control over the affairs of the relationship. In the same vein, Aihie says that, "domestic violence is the intentional and persistent abuse of anyone in the home in a way that causes pain, distress or injury. It refers to any abusive treatment of one family member by another, thus violating the law of basic human rights (2). Although, the victims of domestic violence are not only women, men also suffer abuses in the hands of their partners. But it is equally important to examine the rate women suffer domestic violence in the society. With no doubt, women suffer domestic violence more than men in the society. This is due to a number of factors including the fact that many societies across the world are patriarchal in nature. According to Amnesty international reports (2007), "...a third (and in some cases two-thirds) of women are believed to have been subjected to physical, sexual and psychological violence carried out primarily by husbands, partners and fathers while girls are often forced into early marriage and are at risk of punishment if they attempt to escape from their husbands" (Pag:11). In the same vein, World Health Organization report (2021) notes that:

Over a quarter of women aged 15-49 years who have been in a relationship have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner at least once in their lifetime (since age 15). The prevalence estimates of lifetime intimate partner violence range from 20% in the Western Pacific, 22% in high-income countries and Europe and 25% in the WHO Regions of the Americas to 33% in the WHO African region, 31% in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean region, and 33% in the WHO South-East Asia region. Globally as many as 38% of all murders of women are committed by intimate partners. (Pag:3)

Indeed, like other parts of the world, women across Africa, including Nigeria have been faced with problems of domestic violence. This is because, apart from the fact that the nation is a patriarchal society, where women are subordinated, social realities such as hash economic atmosphere, unemployment, drug abuse, among other things are common in the country. Thus, the aforementioned realities are perhaps some of the other factors responsible for the prevailing issues of domestic violence confronting the people.

**Brief About Theatre for Development**
Theatre for development is a unique style of theatre and mode of communication which focuses on disseminating information to a particular community with the aims of influencing the socio-economic and political situations of the people positively. Oga Steve Abah posits that theatre for development is a kind of theatre that, "intervenes to motivate, animate or catalyse the people so that they can dialogically question their existing reality, critically..."
Musa Salifu and Yunusa Musa: Theatre for development as a competent vehicle for the eradication of domestic violence against women

determine the root of their problems and work out strategies for solving them" (121). Oga further buttress that:

All over the world, where theatre for development (TfD) is practiced, it defines itself as an alternative practice; and the agenda it per uses always is that of change. The notion of 'amateur' (other) is quite strong in TfD's definition of itself and its role. It is also significant that in its practice ‘otherness’ is central to TfD's discursive strategy, first in its artistic form and secondly, in the issues and participants involved in it. However, the end of point of exploration and subjugation is to keep point of equilibrium or change. It is the conduct of the journey from the point of disjunction to where a resolution, no matter how tenuous, may be achieved that is at the centre of the practice (99).

Among other things, Oga submissions have emphasized on the fact that TfD usually involves a number of methods and strategies as well as artistic activities like drama, dance, song as well as other art forms in order to achieve its aims. The aim of TfD is not only to make the participants to be aware of their problems, but also to become active participants in providing solutions to problems by being involved in the TfD's stages of activities which includes research, design, evaluation and implementation. Thus, Mda affirms that TfD is:

... a theatre that contributes to the process of healing, for it confronts the pain rather than deny its existence. It's audience is active participants in the performance and therefore in creating, and distributing their own language. . . the audiences are transformed into dramatic actors and the dramatic actors are transformed into social actors. (in Boh, 108)

However, several scholars, though, differ in their arguments, attested to the fact that no meaningful change and development can take place without efficient applications of communication. Thus, over the years, potent approaches of communication have been identified; one of such is TfD. Many TfD productions are a mix of "Theatre of the Oppressed" (TO), a technique created by Augusto Boal in a form of community-based theatre that recognizes the benefits of the target community participation in the communication processes instead of the aged long method of top-bottom approach. Through this, many communities, and organizations have over the years provided education or propaganda channelled towards human and societal development.

Methodology
This study adopts the descriptive survey design to collect and analyse its data. A survey design is an instrument of the qualitative research methodology which uses the sample data of a finding to document, describe and explain what is existent or non-existent on the present status of a phenomenon under investigation. According to Elmaikwu, "a survey research design is one which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analysing data from only a few people considered to be a representative sample of the entire population" (42). Paul Egwemi adds that,
Musa Salifu and Yunusa Musa: Theatre for development as a competent vehicle for the eradication of domestic violence against women

"survey can be used for both large and small population by selecting and studying samples chosen from the population to discover the relative incidence, distribution and inter-relations among sociological and psychological variables" (65).

This study adopts questionnaire and oral interview as its instruments for data collection. These instruments were adopted in order to gather an objective answers from the respondents. The questionnaire used for the study consists of sections A & B. Section A elicits information on the personal data of the respondents. Section B contains 28 items, the items in section B are placed on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (4Points), Agree (3Points), Disagree (2 Points), Strongly Disagree (1Point).

However, descriptive statistics method of analysis was used in the analysis of data collected. Mean was used to answer the research questions. A bench mark mean of 2.50 was used for decision making. Any item that had a mean response of 2.50 and above were taken as agree while items that had mean response below 2.50 were taken as disagree. The formula for the data analysis is given by:

\[ X = \frac{\sum FX}{N} \]

Where

- \( X \) = mean
- \( \sum \) = summation
- \( X \) = Nominal value of responses
- \( N \) = Total number of respondents

Emaikwu, S. O posits that population, "is a group of people or items about or from which the researcher wants to obtain information to aid his or her findings" (13). The target population of this research work comprises adults citizens of Anyigba community and all the lecturers and students of Department of Theatre Arts, Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba, Kogi State, Nigeria.

In the course of this research work, a sample of 142 respondents was used. This sample was randomly drawn from a population of 1442 comprising both the lecturers, non-academic staff and students. This sample size represented about 10% of the entire population of the study.

A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted for this study. In the first stage, three levels were selected from the department using simple sampling technique. Simple random sampling technique was used in order to give every level equal chance of being selected and represented for the study. The names of the levels were written on piece of papers, folded and put in a container, shuffled and the researchers drew the levels with replacement, i.e., balloting with replacement. In the second stage, one level each was drawn from the three levels chosen for the study using purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling technique was used in order to select levels with large population of students. Lastly, 30 students (male and female) were selected from each level making a total number of 90 students which were used for the study. Since the total numbers of lecturers are few, all the staff of the department including non-academic staff totalling (15), were selected for the study. This gave rise to 105 as the study sample.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation
This section focuses on the presentation, interpretation and analysis of data generated from the field work by the researchers, and presented below:

Research Question 1: To what extent are women faced with domestic violence issues in Anyigba, Kogi State, Nigeria?
Musa Salifu and Yunusa Musa: Theatre for development as a competent vehicle for the eradication of domestic violence against women

The data in Table 1 are used to answer this question. Table 1 reveals the extent to which domestic violence issues are prevalent in Anyigba, Kogi State. Items 2, 3, 4 all had mean response values above the 2.50 benchmark set for accepting or rejecting an item. This high values indicate that the there is high rate issues of domestic violence in Anyigba, Kogi State, Nigeria with exception to number 1 alone.

Table 1: Extent to which women are faced with domestic violence issues in Anyigba

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The rate of domestic violence issues in Anyigba very low</td>
<td>10 30 62 40</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Many women are faced with domestic violence issues in Anyigba, Kogi State</td>
<td>70 60 10 2</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Domestic violence is one of the major social issues confronting Anyigba, Kogi State</td>
<td>40 40 30 32</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The rate of domestic violence issues in Anyigba is high</td>
<td>80 50 2 10</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Extent to which Domestic Violence Affects the Lives of Anyigba women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Domestic violence has serious effects on the lives of Anyigba women</td>
<td>50 50 22 20</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Domestic violence has little effects on the lives of Anyigba women</td>
<td>30 10 42 60</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Domestic violence has no negative consequences on the lives of Anyigba women</td>
<td>10 20 70 42</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Domestic violence has many negative impacts on the lives of Anyigba women</td>
<td>40 60 30 12</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 2: To what extent domestic violence affects the lives of Anyigba women?

The data in Table 2 are used to answer this question. Table 2 shows the extent domestic
Musa Salifu and Yunusa Musa: Theatre for development as a competent vehicle for the eradication of domestic violence against women

violence has negative effects on Anyigba women. From the table, items 5 and 8 have mean values above the benchmark set for accepting or rejecting an item while items 6, 7 and 8 have low mean responses which indicates that domestic violence has negative effects on the lives of Anyigba women.

Research Question 3: To what extent can theatre for development mediate in a situation of intimate partners’ crisis?

Table 3: The potential of Theatre for Development in Mediating in a situation of intimate partners’ crisis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Theatre for development has the potentials to mediate in a situation of intimate partners crisis</td>
<td>50 50 22 20</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Theatre for development has just little potential to mediate in a situation of intimate partners crisis</td>
<td>30 10 42 60</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Theatre for development has no potential to mediate in a situation of intimate partners crisis</td>
<td>10 20 70 42</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Theatre for development has a very low potential to mediate in a situation of intimate partners crisis</td>
<td>40 60 30 12</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in Table 3 are used to answer this question.

The data in Table 3 show different reactions from respondents on the potential of theatre for development in mediating in a situation of intimate partners’ crisis. It can be deduced, however, from the data that theatre for development has potentials to mediate in a situation of intimate partners’ crisis.

Discussion

The research work sought to investigate the potentials of theatre for development in addressing issues of domestic violence, particular in Anyigba, Kogi State, Nigeria. Thus, from the data collected and analysed, the following findings and results among others were realized:

1. Women are faced with domestic violence issues in Anyigba, Kogi State, Nigeria
2. Domestic violence has serious negative effects on the lives of women
3. There is a high rate of domestic violence issues in Anyigba, Kogi State, Nigeria
4. Theatre for development has great potentials to mediate in a situation of intimate partners’ crisis.

Conclusion

Like other countries of the world, the Nigerian nation has not been free of social issues. Most of the social issues that have been confronting the nation over the years have not only affected many Nigerians as individuals, but the all-round development of the country. In this study, the researchers identified domestic violence as one of such problems. Through the data collected and
analysed, the researchers equally found out that communication approaches such as theatre for development are veritable tools for educating Nigerians about the dangers of domestic violence. Thus, from the results gathered from the findings, the paper concludes that theatre for development is a competent tool that can be used to mediate in domestic violence situations.

Based on the findings of this study, it is necessary for the researchers to make some recommendations. These recommendations are aimed at serving as a guide to the government, non-governmental organisations, intimate partners, social workers and the general public on the need to discourage domestic violence.

1. The government should intensify its efforts to improve the laws and legislations that protect the right and safety of women.
2. Intimate partners should do all things possible to promote interpersonal communication among themselves.
3. Non-governmental organizations should not be left out in the fight against domestic violence.
4. Closely related to the above is the need for the media organizations to discourage issues of domestic violence through different programs on radio and television.
5. On the part of government and non-governmental organisations, once again, efforts must be made to use and support theatre for development projects that are geared towards eradication of domestic violence.

Works Cited