

COVID-19 PANDEMIC LOCKDOWN, INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND FAMILY COHESION IN KANO, NIGERIA

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Abstract: *This study focused on COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, intimate partner violence and family cohesion in Kano, Nigeria. The study objective is to examine the level of cohesion within the family during the nationwide lockdown and to assess the impact of family cohesion on adherence to COVID-19 precautions. Focus group discussion was conducted in selected areas in Kano. Purposive sampling technique was used to draw sample elements. Data generated were transcribed and analyzed using qualitative method. The findings show a high level of cohesion within families in Kano during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. Family cohesion was found to have a great impact on adherence to COVID-19 precautions. However, some cases of violence between intimate partners were reported during COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. The study therefore recommends the need for continuous orientation of people on the importance of family cohesion to engender cordial relationships and emotional bond within the family.*

Keywords: *COVID-19; Pandemic; Intimate partner violence; Precaution; Family cohesion.*

1. Introduction

The importance of family cohesion in socialization and sustenance of family in all spheres cannot be over emphasized. The family is a functional and immanent unit of society (Sooryamoorthy, 2012). A family is a kinship unit that exist as a social reality (UNESCO, 1992) It consist of individuals bewed by marriage, blood, consensual union or adoption, communicating and interacting with one another (Sonawat, 2001). Members of a family believe that they have a unique relationship with one another based on blood ties, affection, shared experience, duty and common interests (Minnet, 2000). It must be noted that most Nigerian families consist of a father, mother and children, and many families; most especially in rural areas include two or more wives, grandparents, uncles, and aunts. Family sizes vary in Nigeria; a family may have between two to six children in an urban area, while a more rural family may have as many as six to ten children. The type of family structure found in the area of study is monogamous and polygamous family. Olson and Defrain (2000) asserted that monogamous family consist of only one spouse. Polygamous family on the other hand is one in which there are more than one spouse. Polygyny is the foundation of polygamous family in Nigeria. The nature and structure of interactions within the family is easily described on the basis of family composition characteristics (Suárez et al., 2015). Different kinds of human experiences are found in the family, these include love, communal sharing, tenderness, honesty, joy, sadness, happiness, poverty, deceit, jealousy, envy, warfare, violence, acceptance and guidance (Action Health, 2003).

All over the world, there are variations in the ways family members cohere or stick together and communicate with one another. These variations sum up the level of emotional bond between family members. Family cohesion refers to passionate relationship and intense bond that members of the same family exhibit towards themselves (Olson, Rusell and Sprenkle, 1982). This is seen in the day-to-day activities and interactions of family members regardless of disagreements or conflicts between them. Family cohesion denotes ways in which members of family are detached or united. Family cohesion according to Olson et al. (1982) is quite different from family adaptability which describes the capability of the family system to modify and adjust in line with prevailing circumstances. Olson et al. (1982) submitted that family cohesion guard against external stressors. This was corroborated by Hovey and King (1996). Cohesion according to Salgado de Snyder (1987) is a guard against external stressors and distress. Evidence from literature linked low level of family cohesion to greater likelihood of psychological distress (Guarnaccia and Martinez, 2005; Cohen and Wills, 1985; Turner, 1981, Dean and Lin, 1977). Similarly, Ugwu, Ugwu, Njemanze, and Nwosu (2019) noted that there is a link between life satisfaction, well-being and higher cohesion in literature (Vandeleur, Perrez, & Schoebi, 2007). Another study showed that lower level of family cohesion is related to increasing relationship problems, poor subjective well-being and poor quality of life (Kager, Lang and Berghofer, 2000). Elements of high cohesion include physical intimacy and consistency, warmth, time together, nurturance which gives emotional security to every member of the family (Green and Werner, 1996).

Fawole, Okedare and Reed (2021) reported that some women experienced violence from intimate partners during the nationwide lockdown orchestrated by Covid-19 in Nigeria as anxiety about shortage of money and food created tension that led to conflict and intimate partner violence. This type of violence negates the ideals of family cohesion. Commonly used synonyms for intimate partner violence include; spousal abuse, and intimate partner abuse among others. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) denotes violence between spouses who are married or closely related romantically or sexually. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2012) noted that IPV is any behavior during an affectionate relationship that engender sexual, psychological or physical harm to individuals concerned. Intimate partner violence within the family indicates a weak emotional bond. An examination of family cohesion during Covid -19 lockdown is therefore necessary because the emergence of the novel virus known as Covid-19 is one of the external stressors that shook most families vigorously in Nigeria and in other climes.

World Health Organization became aware of Covid-19 in December 2019 after the initial incidence of the infection at the capital of Hubei province in China. Nigeria had her first incidence of Covid-19 on February 27, 2020 (NCDC, 2020). The highly infectious disease otherwise known as corona virus disease is a part of corona viruses known as SARS-CoV-2. Covid -19 emerged in Wuhan city, China (Shigemura, Ursano, Morganstein, et al., 2020). In recent years, corona viruses are found to be the major pathogens of respiratory disease outbreak. Research indicates that birds and mammals are potential carriers of the virus. Human beings are easily exposed to the attack of the virus (Schoeman and Fielding, 2019).

The initial number of persons infected by the virus came from other countries. They ended up infecting people they had contact with on arrival in Nigeria. However,

within some weeks of the first incidence of the virus, community spread of the virus became a matter of urgent concern as individuals who had no travel history or contact with travelers became infested with the virus. WHO Director-General (2020) observed that majority of covid-19 patients showed moderate symptoms while others showed severe and fatal symptoms such as multiple organ failure, shortness of breath among others. Older individuals with underlying chronic diseases are more susceptible to the risk of the virus.

At this juncture, a focus on the family and the level of cohesion in families cannot be overemphasized for individuals belong to one family or another. Family cohesion indicates the right behavior among members of a family (Field and Duchoslav, 2009), it determines the nature of love that members of family exhibit among themselves (Soliday, Kool and Lande, 2001). Studies by Cohen et al. (2004); Hauser et al., (1990) show that families that are more cohesive or have environments that support family cohesion, have higher adherence level and better control of glycemia. Although, these studies were not carried out on a world-wide pandemic, yet the inferences drawn from the studies provides great insights for the current study. A thorough examination of literature suggests that warm and well-structured caring family environments that have high level of cohesion may promote adherence to health and treatment regimen such as better glycemic control and Type 1 Diabetes treatment (Hauser et al., 1990; Anderson, 2004; Cohen et al., 2004; Lewin et al., 2006), it also assists Nigerian employees produce mechanisms to deal with effects of burnout (Ugwu, Ugwu, Njemanze, & Nwosu, 2019). Equally, higher levels of support from family and cohesion among other factors engendered minimal signs of depression among women who are mothers of Type 1 Diabetic children (Blankfeld and Holahan, 1996).

In view of the colossal loss inflicted on families all over the world by Covid- 19, an examination of Covid-19 pandemic lockdown and family cohesion is appropriate and timely.

2. Statement of the Problem

The spread of covid-19 in Nigeria came as a rude shock to most families as they were caught unaware. The means of livelihood and sustenance of family members were turned upside down. This prevented some men from playing the roles of breadwinners to their wives and children as expected. In some situations, the inability of fathers to provide daily needs for members of the family generated conflict and intimate partner violence which can weaken the emotional bond within the family. Families that survive on daily income could barely feed and a lot of salary earners could not access their monies in Banks. The palliative measures provided by government did not get to every family as those palliatives in terms of food items were inadequate and were siphoned by some unscrupulous officials. Some family members were infected with the virus, and they ended up transmitting the same to other family members. Some families lost their breadwinners while more than two persons died in some other families. There was panic across the length and breadth of Nigeria. The level of family cohesion was threatened as every member of the family sees other members as potential carrier of the novel virus. This situation is worrisome at a period where members of the family needed to work together to withstand the scourge of the pandemic. Hence, a study of covid-19 pandemic lockdown, intimate partner violence and family cohesion is apt.

3. Objectives of Study

The objectives of the study include the following:

1. To examine the level of Family cohesion in Kano during Covid-19 pandemic lockdown.
2. To examine family cohesion impact on adherence to Covid-19 precautions
3. To assess the relationship between level of family cohesion and intimate partner violence during Covid- 19 pandemic lockdown.

4. Methodology

Purposive sampling was employed in the selection of elements from the population consisting of individuals from different families in Kano, Nigeria. Kano was selected purposively due to its population concentration and its reputation as the center of commerce in northern Nigeria. Discussants were purposively selected from Naibawa and Sabon-gari areas of Kano metropolis. This is due to the peculiarities of these areas as families across different social classes are readily available in the two locations.

A total of thirty persons participated in the focus group discussion. Discussants were divided into three focus groups for effective discussion. Two focus group discussion sessions with ten participants each, making a total of twenty discussants was held at Sabon –gari due to the high population of the area while one focus group discussion session was held at Naibawa with ten discussants. The age of discussants ranges between thirty to sixty years, so as to give room for matured discussion. A well-trained female research assistant was commissioned to assist and serve as interpreter during discussion sessions. The female research assistant facilitated discussions with women as cultural factors does not allow unlimited interactions between men and women who are neither married to each other nor belong to the same family. Discussions were recorded and later transcribed for easy content analysis. Covid- 19 precautionary measures were strictly adhered to during focus group discussion as social distancing was observed. Also, soap, water and liquid hand sanitizer were provided at the venue of the discussion. Discussants made use of face mask. Face shields were provided free of charge for discussants. Participation in the focus group discussion was voluntary and the identity of discussants were protected.

5. Data Presentation

Table 1: Content Analysis

Code	Description	Extract from Discussion
Level of Family Cohesion	<i>Female, 48 years, Naibawa</i>	The level of cohesion within my family was high during the nationwide lockdown because my husband came home to stay with us from his place of work at Abuja. My children in Boarding school also came home and we really enjoyed the lockdown period.
	<i>Male, 35 years Sabon-gari</i>	The level of family cohesion was high during the nationwide lockdown in my street, most especially in my home. We all stayed together in love and

		cooperated with each other so as to prevent ourselves from getting infected.
	<i>Male 52 years Sabon-gari</i>	Covid-19 pandemic lockdown did not affect my love for my wives and children. In fact, the lockdown strengthen our bond as I really had enough time to relate with them more than ever.
Impact of family cohesion on adherence to Covid-19 precautions	<i>Male, 44 years, Sabon -gari</i>	Family cohesion made family members adhere strictly to precautions recommended for safety purposes in different Homes.
	<i>Female, 58 years, Naibawa</i>	I believe family cohesion had great impact on adherence to Covid-19 precautions during the lockdown period. I am saying this because most of the sensitization campaigns on Radio and Television were targeted at making family members look out for other family members and to advise them on the need to adhere to precautionary measures against the virus
	Female, 37 years, Sabon-gari	I think there must be some form of emotional bond and strong cohesion among family members before they can listen to each other or follow the advice of one another. Therefore, I would say family cohesion has significant impact on adherence to Covid-19 precautions
Intimate Partner Violence and Family cohesion	Female, 41years, Sabon-gari	There is a relationship between level of family cohesion and violence between intimate partners during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. Some breadwinners could not meet the needs of family members. This weakened the emotional bond between spouses, and it resulted in wife battery and other forms of violence
	Male, 60 years, Naibawa	I had an opportunity to mediate between a husband and wife that fought during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, and I can say confidently that the level of cohesion and love within the family is low. There is a relationship between level of family cohesion and violence between intimate partners during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown
	Female, 32 years, Sabon-gari	One thing is sure as far as I am concerned, conflict will always arise when emotional bond is not strong. So, I believe there is a relationship between level of family cohesion and intimate partner violence during Covid-19 pandemic lockdown

Source: Researchers' fieldwork, 2021

6. Discussion of Findings

Analysis of the information elicited during the focus group discussion shows that the level of Family cohesion in Kano during Covid 19 pandemic lockdown was high as emotional bond between family members remains strong irrespective of the Covid -19 pandemic. This supported Minnet (2000) position that members of a family feel that they have a unique relationship with each other based on blood, affection, duty, shared experience, and common interests. However, few discussants observed that the level of family cohesion during the covid-19 pandemic lockdown was low as some families witnessed tension due to unmet needs.

Furthermore, discussants noted that the impact of family cohesion on adherence to covid 19 precautions cannot be overemphasized as the emotional bond within families made some family members who are well educated encourage other members of their families to take necessary precautions against covid 19 virus for the good of family members and the society at large. This lend credence to Hauser et al. (1990); Anderson (2004); Cohen et al. (2004); Lewin et al. (2006) which noted that warm and well-structured caring family environments that have high level of cohesion may promote adherence to health and treatment regimen as seen in the case of covid-19 pandemic.

In addition, discussants assessed the relationship between level of family cohesion and intimate partner violence. They admitted that cases of violence between intimate partners were recorded during this period and one of the discussants played the role of a mediator between two couples during the lockdown. This corroborated Fawole, Okedare and Reed (2021) report on experiences of violence between intimate partners during lockdown in Nigeria. Discussants observed that incidence of intimate partner violence could be linked to low level of family cohesion.

7. Conclusion and recommendations

The findings indicated a high level of cohesion within families in Kano during the covid-19 pandemic lockdown, though there were cases of intimate partner violence within some families which shows a low level of family cohesion. Family cohesion was found to have great impact on adherence to covid-19 precautions. The study recommends the need for continuous orientation of the people on the importance of family cohesion epitomized by cordial relationships and emotional bond within the family. The study equally recommends the need to eschew intimate partner violence.

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