



Gender –Based Violence in Nigeria: The Trends & Ways of Forward.

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Abstract: *Violence against women and girls is one of the most prevalent human rights violations in the world. It knows no social, economic or national boundaries. Gender-based violence undermines the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims, yet it remains shrouded in a culture of silence. Victims of violence can suffer sexual and reproductive health consequences, including forced and unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, traumatic fistula, sexually transmitted infections including HIV, and even death. This paper highlights the trends and implications of violence against women in the context of growing insecurity in Nigeria. This is because the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are linked to the extent women are protected from violence. The paper argues for the abolition of harmful practices such as sexual violence and female Genital Mutilation (FGM), honour killing, early marriage, women trafficking and the kidnapping of women by the perpetrator of these acts as panacea for gender harmony in Nigeria. The paper recommends that the Nigerian government through state and non-state actions should put substantive measures in place to protect women from violence, violators of extant laws punished and that the several other bills on violence against women should be passed into law and enforced.*

Key words: *Violence, Women and Security, Nigeria, Gender Sustainable Development Goals.*

INTRODUCTION

Discriminations against the females have greatly attracted the attention of researchers, scholars, professionals and institutions at the local and international system. It has also been observed that the persistent poverty situation in developing societies like Nigeria is a consequence of continued neglect and discrimination against the female population (See UNHDI Report, 2005). CFCR (2005) adds: “while the forum acknowledges the reality of oppression and marginalization of women across nations, races and ethnicities, lived experiences of gender oppression for Nigerian women assumes a frightening dimension when factoring in the peculiarities of the feminization of poverty, women access to elective and appointive positions, the enduring nature of the ideology of patriarchy and the manner in which religion and culture supply idioms that reinforce the marginality and powerlessness of female gender” (Eme ,et.al,2015). As the forum has painfully documented, the marginal position of women has persisted despite the declared commitment of government to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and adoption of a National Policy on Women, incorporating several elements of the Beijing declaration.

All societies of the world are gendered. In a gendered society like the Igbo people of South-Eastern Nigeria, women’s role can be grouped under three: reproductive, productive and managing activities (Eme, 2008). Reproductive role encapsulates child bearing and upbringing responsibilities as well as domestic chores; productive role entails women’s work for pay either in cash or in kind; while community managing role are activities undertaken by women at the community level as an extension of their productive role. That is, to ensure the productive and maintenance of scarce resources of collective consumption such as water, health care and education. Specifically a gendered society is one where organic division of labour exists.

It is axiomatic to posit that the universal declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to take part in the government of his or her country. Also, the empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's socio-economic and political status is significant for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life. The power relations that prevent women from leading fulfilled life operate in many levels of society, from the most personal to the highly public.

Despite the widespread movement towards democratization in most polities, women are highly under-represented at most levels of government, especially in ministerial and other executive bodies, and have made little progress in attaining political power in legislative bodies or in achieving the target endorsed by the Economic and Social Council of having 30 percent women in positions at decision making levels by 1995 (UNO, 1996:109).

While the Beijing Platform for Action seeks 30 percent share of decision making positions for women only 16 countries attained this objectives in the 1990s (Amanor-Wilks, 2002:10). In Africa, according to data compiled by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa four countries that came closest to achieving 30 percent female decision makers in 1997 were Seychelles (27 percent), South African (27 percent) Mozambique (25 percent) and Eritrea (21 percent), but 36 countries had less than 10 percent female representation in government. Recently, South Africa has increased women representation 27 percent, Uganda and Rwanda have 25 percent and 48.8 respectively (Egwu, 2005:13).

The overall effect of the gender-based violence is that in the majority of cases, the victimized females are often denied access to critical resources required for their well being as well as certain rights and privileges necessary for actualization of their full life potentials. These brazen acts of inequality are rooted in the fact that every culture assigns certain roles to individuals according to their sexes. All societies are therefore pervaded by bare exhibition of male chauvinism which is strongly supported by the structural framework of patriarchy in social and cultural dealings. Based on the foregoing, this chapter examines the concept of gender-based violence, the impact on the lives of the victims, especially in Nigeria and the ways and means of minimizing or eliminating this scourge so as to create a better society.

Theorizing Gender - Based Violence

Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by subordinate position compared with men (UNESCO, 1999:52). In Article 1 of the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVW), proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in its resolution 48/104 of 20 December 1993, the term violence against women (UNESCO, 1999:53) was defined as:

Any act of gender-based violence that results in or its likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

This view supports Lyman's thesis (2005) that men primarily direct gender-based violence towards women as a tool of humiliation and subjugation. Scholars such as Oguonu (2009), Riger (1991), Konrad and Gutek (1986), Popovich et al (1986), Korn and Sax (1996), viewed gender-based violence as the enforcement of gender role inequalities within the social system. It is seen as a tool of domination to keep the women perpetually subordinated to men". This has to do with sexual harassment; and American Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) (1980) guidelines views sexual harassment as "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Popovich (1988), Fitzgerald, Gelfand and Drasgow (1995) and Ladebo (2003) view sexual harassment as including "unwanted sexual attention such as hugging, stroking and demanding a date". It also includes "those verbal and non-verbal behaviours such as jokes, taunts, gestures and exhibition of pornographic materials directed at and/or intended to degrade women". They went on to stress that such behavior could be perceived as harassment when:

- There are physical advances accompanied by threats of punishment for non-compliance;
- There is an unequal power relation between the harasser and the victims;
- It elicits negative response from the person being harassed;
- The behavior is seen as being inappropriate for the actor's role.

Gender-based violence can manifest in various ways which include, using it as a tool of domination to have the female folk perpetually subordinated to male folk. Other manifestations of gender-based violence are

physical assaults, sexual abuse and rape against girls and women, harmful customs and traditional practices that give the male folk unnecessary advantage and arm them with power and authority over the female folk, enforcement of gender role inequalities, encroachment on women's right and impediment to women's contribution to development process among others.

The Asian Legal Resource Centre (2002) identified three contexts of violence-Family, Community and State, which according to the Centre encompass but not limited to the following:

- a. Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family; wife-battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape and female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women,...violence related to exploitation.
- b. Physical, sexual and psychological violence is occurring within the general community; rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work and educational institutions, trafficking in women and forced prostitution.
- c. Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the state (UNESCO, 1999:53).

Gielen, (2005) while supporting this classification, posits that sexual and gender-based violence can be taken as "a range of harmful customs and behaviours against girls and women, including intimate partner violence, domestic violence, assaults against women, child sexual abuse and rape. It is generally derives from cultural and social norms that imbue men with power and authority over women. There is no gainsaying the fact that gender-based violence causes a lot of harm and help in complicating the problems of women and girls. When this social order and rule of law breakdown, it is women who suffer most. (International Crisis Group, 2006). The International Crisis Group (2006) also noted that in the event of conflict, women are usually subjected to a lot of difficulties. These difficulties include:

- Being subjected to gender-based violence
- Being displaced and forced to travel to camps as refugees
- Becoming single heads of households

It should be noted however that despite the above difficulties, women are far more than victims. It was also observed that they are "often the key to preventing violence from emerging, resolving ongoing conflicts, and rebuilding societies once the guns go silent." Yet they are rarely given a chance in resolving conflicts. Changing gender norms is difficult. According to Barker and Ricardo (2005) who observed that this change could even be made slower by the fact that "those who make programme and policy decisions often have their own deep-seated biases about gender and are frequently resistant to question those Efforts to question the sexual behavior of boys and men in the African context, for example, have sometimes run into resistance by national level leaders who perceive that African men themselves are being bashed and maligned.

Emerging Trends in the Typologies of Gender- Based Violence

According to Boserup (1970), Kaufman Dorsey et al (1989), Imam (1990), Will's (1991), UN (1987) Nzomo (1994), among others have posited that the most significant barrier is the socio-cultural system of belief are myths, which informed the socialization process and the gendered education and training most men and women are exposed to from childhood. According to Nzomo (1994), the sex-stereotypes and gender segregation in employment and allocation of roles in private and public life are fundamentally a product of the early socialization process, the indoctrination of the social environment. In this regard many women's hang-ups and lack of confidence in their ability competently to execute public leadership roles arises from socialization for subordination. However, it is in the social-cultural context that women's secondary role is most evident and has the most important consequences for the participation of women in politics.

In the words of Osinulu,

The consideration of the Federal Republic of Nigeria clearly stipulates that no individual (man or woman) should be discriminated against in the exercise of his or her rights to certain basic necessities of life, citizenship, shelter, education, right to freedom of speech, etc. In practice however, discriminatory practices against the female gender abound in all facets of life. Women are discriminated against at the early stages of life. For instance, the arrival of a baby boy in the family is heralded with great pomp and bride by its parents, but not so with the baby girl. The girl child; in May part of the country is withdrawn from school to help on the farm or share in the household chores, while the boy child is allowed to continue his education uninterrupted. Even where girls do continue their education, the rate of attraction is much higher for girls than boys (1996:20).

These are other discriminatory practices in our socio-cultural environment have had the effect that the average Nigerian woman is timid, uneducated, lack leadership skills and is no match for her male counterpart. She has not been prepared for any leadership position of any sort. Women are expected to support men, not to be seen to be confronting them or demanding equality and thereby fostering hostility and antagonism:

There is no need for a woman to be liberated from man ... the Men own the government. There is a need for women to fully participate in government but we need some level of understanding. We (the NCWS) are not there to take away what they have but we Are there to assist them in doing whatever they do better (Pereira, 2003: 146)

In other words, this thesis posits that women's roles are secondary and are just an additional activity to their domestic roles. Imam et al (1985) and Parpart (1990) among others have documented the woes of the 'double day' that working career women have to bear, especially in Africa where support services are few, absent or even when they exist. Nzomo (1994) quoting Paepart (1990) notes that,

Given the existing gender division of labour, there are no easy solutions for a woman who wants to succeed in her career: most working women juggle harried schedules... having fewer children or becoming single, separated or divorced in order to reduce time spent on husband's care, delay and give up marriage or family and relationships (Nzomo, 1994:205).

A 1987 UN survey further notes that even in the rare occasions when a woman has fought her way into the top decision-making position, further barriers are often erected that contribute to disemboweling her and crowding her effectiveness in that position (UN, 1987:35).

Explaining the socio-cultural sex role thesis further, the 1987 UN study goes on to argue that because people rely on stereotypes to evaluate observed behaviour, there may be perceived conflict between the behaviour that the high position requires and the behaviour general expected of women. And because most leadership positions are filled by men who are used to relating to women as mother, sister daughter or secretary-assistant, many professional male managers may never have had male as a woman 'boss' as top executive. Moreover, due to the deep rooted traditional beliefs about the subordinate role of women in society, both men and women may find it difficult to accord the top female public decision maker the respect and cooperation she requires to be effective (Nzomo, 1994:205).

The second barrier to women's participation in public role and politics is the lack of access to adequate quality formal education thesis. This thesis posits that lack of adequate quality of formal education in itself acts as a major barrier to a woman's advancement to top decision-making level. And because of lack of education, because of the customs in which they were brought up, the men who were in the position to write all the documents are the domineering factors that keep singing that a woman's place is at home. According to Osinulu, (1996:21-22):

The lack of education and expertise among the womenfolk in relation to the demands of political leadership is an impediment incidental to women's participation in politics. As a result of low educational and professional attainment, they are poorly equipped mentally to venture into the male dominated world of politics. As a result of her deficiency in the fields of education, professional ability and poor leadership skills, the Nigerian woman lacks self-confidence, courage and boldness required to aim for the highest post in political arena. The reasons that account for such that account for such a poor status are not farfetched; the literacy rate is lower for women (54%) than for men (31%) in many parts of the country, girls are withdrawn from schools for various reasons (child marriage, child labour, trading, etc), while for those who do enroll in schools, the rate of attrition is higher for girls than for boys.

In political terms therefore, individual resources which include education, personal income, age, marital status, number of children, and view of the spouse among others are significant determinants for the women's participation in politics. According to Zenn(2014),2013 marked a significant evolution in Boko Haram's tactics. Boko Haram carried out a series of kidnappings, in which one of the main features was the instrumental use of women, in response to corresponding tactics by the Nigerian government. Kidnapping is a recent development for the group and the first suggestions of this tactic emerged in Boko Haram statements in January 2012. It was the group's leader, Abubakar Shekau, who issued a video message threatening to kidnap the wives of government officials in response to the government imprisoning the wives of Boko Haram members (Associated Press, 27 January 2012).

However, Boko Haram's first actual kidnapping operation was carried out one year later in February 2013, with the abduction of a seven-member French family in northern Cameroon, and then brought back to

Nigeria (The Guardian, 19 April 2013). The family group included four children (). Between February 2013 and May 2013, the kidnapping strategy was brought directly to Nigerian soil, with the abductions of more than a dozen government officials and their families in Boko Haram's main base of Borno State. In May 2013, Boko Haram carried out a mass assault on a police barracks in Bama, Borno State in which militants captured 12 Christian women and children (Agence France-Presse, 13 May 2013). This was a prolonged attack, and the abductions followed a fierce battle with security forces in which more than 100 people were killed. On May 7, 2013, Shekau claimed the kidnappings of these 12 women and children in Boko Haram's name. In another video message, he then promised to make these hostages his 'servants' if certain conditions, such as the release of Boko Haram members and their wives from prison, were not met (Agence France-Presse, video, 13 May 2013).

Shekau's statement related to the Nigerian government's arrest in 2012 of the wives and children of several Boko Haram leaders, for which the Bama kidnappings were a response. More than 100 women and children had been detained, among them Shekau's own wives. Also arrested were the wife and children of the commander for Kano, Suleiman Muhammed; the pregnant wife of the commander for Sokoto, Kabiru Sokoto, who gave birth while in prison; and the wife of the suicide-bomber who attacked the 'This Day' media house in Abuja in April 2012 (Barkindo et al 2013: 22). These arrests were not unusual in themselves. On April 2014, the group captured Chibok and took away over 218 female students.

Specifically, examples of socio-psychology of gender based violence include:

- i. **Rape and Marital Rape:** This involves the invasion of any part of the body of a victim or of the perpetrator with a sexual organ, or of the anal or genital opening of the victim with any object or any other part of the body by force, coercion, taking advantage of a coercive environment, or against a person incapable of giving genuine consent.
- ii. **Child Sexual Abuse:** Defilement and incest. These involve any acts where a child is used for sexual gratification.
- iii. **Forced Sodomy/Anal Rape:** This involves forced or coerced anal intercourse, usually male to male or male to female.
- iv. **Attempted Rape or Attempted Forced Sodomy/Anal Rape:** This is deemed to have occurred without penetration.
- v. **Sexual Abuse:** This involves actual or threatened physical intrusion of sexual nature, including inappropriate touching, by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.
- vi. **Sexual Exploitation:** Any abuse of a position of vulnerability or weakness or trust for sexual purposes; this includes profiting momentarily, socially or politically from sexual exploitation of another. Sexual exploitation is one of the purposes of trafficking in persons thus performing in a sexual manner engagement in pornography or prostitution for granting of goods, services, assistance benefits and sexual slavery.
- vii. **Forced Prostitution:** This involves forced or coerced sex trade in exchange for material resources, services and assistance, usually targeting highly vulnerable women or girls unable to meet basic human needs for themselves and/or their children.
- viii. **Sexual Harassment:** This means any unwelcome, usually repeated and unreciprocated sexual advance, unsolicited sexual attention, demand for sexual access or favours, sexual innuendo or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, display or pornographic material when it interferes with work, is made a condition for employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.
- ix. **Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War and Torture:** These include crimes against humanity of a sexual nature, including rape, sexual slavery, forced abortion or sterilization or any other forms to

prevent birth, forced pregnancy, forced delivery and forced child rearing. This form of torture involves any act or threat of a sexual nature by which severe mental or physical pain or suffering is caused to obtain information.

- x. **Physical Assault.** This includes beating, punching, kicking, burning, maiming or killing, with or without weapons. These often occur in combination with other forms of sexual and gender-based violence.
- xi. **Trafficking, Slavery:** This involves selling and/or trading in human beings for forced sexual activities, forced labour and services.

If the abduction of women by Boko Haram is tactical, other violence against Christian women appears primarily punitive. In Maiduguri, in August 2013, a Christian student reported an attack by Boko Haram on her university accommodation: the men were murdered; the women segregated into Muslim and non-Muslims, and the Christian women systematically raped (Barkindo et al 2013: 23). Such attacks on Christian women by Boko Haram can be regarded as an extension of other institutionalized and long-term discriminatory practices against them in northern regions (Onapajo & Uzodike 2012: 32). Women have faced broad discriminatory practices in both the professional and domestic spheres. They have been targeted in acid-attacks for 'un-Islamic' practices, such as a failure to wear the hijab, or for taking a job (Turaki 2010). Women are also often accused of 'dishonouring Islam'. In 2006, riots ensued in which more than 50 Christians were killed, mostly women and children, after a Christian female teacher confiscated a Qur'an from a student in Bauchi (Alao 2009: 40). This generic culture of discrimination against Christians has enabled the escalation in recent violence.

Emotional and Psychological Violence are also another trend in gender based violence.

There have been no explicit calls for instance in Boko Haram's ideology for this level of violence against Christian women, or women in general (Barkindo et al 2013: 5). However, Boko Haram's command to Jihad often features exhortations to terrorise Christian communities or, in its words, a "War on Christians", and the victimisation of women is a tactic within this strategy (Punch News, 11 July 2012; Coulter et al 2008: 13).

Shariah law is also a factor. Boko Haram's emphasis on the forced imposition of Shariah facilitates GBV through rigidly gendered ideological structures (Onuoha 2010: 57). The rise of Boko Haram coincided with the adoption of Shariah in 12 northern states, and was to some extent a by-product of this (Akanji 2009: 55–60). The version of Shariah law supported by Shekau and Boko Haram promotes narrow gender roles for men and women, enforcing strict rules on women's dress and sexual conduct and instituting other discriminatory and abusive practices against women. These range from the enforced segregation of school-children, to the public flogging of women for fornication (BBC, 7 January 2003). Gendered norms have been adopted by Boko Haram's leaders, who have listed among the values to be opposed, '*the rights and privileges of Women, the idea of homosexuality, lesbianism.. rape of infants.. blue films, prostitution..*' and beauty pageants, all associated with Western ideals (Zenn 2013b; World Stage, 18 March 2012).

Boko Haram's ideology also casts men in hyper-masculine combat roles, their duty to violently oppose the west. By contrast, '*unarmed men, youths, women, cripple and even under age..*' are exempt from battle and constitute illegitimate targets (Sahara Reporters, 22 January 2012). Muslim women - in contrast to Christian women - have customarily been spared, even where Boko Haram has targeted Muslim men, as in an attack on a college in Yobe in September 2013. All male students were killed, but female students were not (International Business Times, 29 September 2013). This binary understanding of gender norms permits GBV to serve as a display of power (Solangon & Patel 2012: 425). Abuses of Christian women both serve to mark their difference from Muslim women, and strike at Christian men, by demonstrating their inability to protect 'their' women. Specifically this trend of violence includes:

- i) **Abuse/Humiliation:** Non-sexual verbal abuse that is insulting, degrading, demeaning; compelling the victim/survivor to engage in humiliating acts, whether in public or private; denying basic expenses for family survival.

- ii) **Confinement:** This connotes isolating a person from friends/family, restricting movements, deprivation of liberty or obstruction/restriction of the right to free movement.

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) is the partial or total removal of the female external genitals or other injury to the female genital organ. This is further defined as all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the female external genital and or injury to the female genital organ for cultural or any other non-therapeutic reasons. FGM/C could be traumatic with immediate complications including excruciating pain, shock, urine retention, ulceration of genitals and injury to adjacent tissue. Other complications include septicemia, infertility, obstructed labour and even death. The procedure is generally carried out on girls between the ages of four and fourteen; it is also done to the newborn/eight days old infants, women who are about to be married and sometimes to women who are pregnant with first child or who have just given birth. FGMC is a fundamental violation of human rights. It subject girls and women to health risks and has life threatening consequences. Among the rights violated are the rights to the highest attainable standard of health and bodily injury. In addition, girls below 18 years cannot be said to give informed consent to such a potentially damaging practice as FGM/C. female Genital Mutilation (FGM), or female cutting is also known as female circumcision. It is a harmful practice being carried out by traditional birth attendants (TBAs), health workers and some old women. FGM is historic and has been practiced for a long time in some African countries. It is often performed by traditional practitioners and others such as midwives and local barbers without anesthesia using scissors, razor blades or broken glass.

Other Harmful Traditional Practice includes:

- i) Early marriage. This is an arranged marriage under the age of legal consent; sexual intercourse in such relationships constitutes statutory rape.
- ii) Forced marriage. This involves an arranged marriage against the victim's wishes, which is commonly exposed to violent and/or abusive consequences if he/she refuses to comply.
- iii) Honour killing and maiming. Maiming or murdering a woman or a girl as a punishment for acts considered inappropriate with regard to her gender, and which are believed to bring shame on the family or community.
- iv) Infanticide and/or neglect. Killing, withholding food from, and/or neglecting female children because they are considered to be of less value in a society than male children.
- v) Denial of education for girls or women. This involves removing of girls from school, prohibiting or obstructing access of girls and women to basic, technical, professional or scientific knowledge.

1. Socio-Economic Violence

- i) Discrimination and/or denial of opportunities and services. These include exclusion, denial of access to education, health assistance or remunerated employment and denial of property rights.
- ii) Social exclusion/ostracism based on sexual orientation. This involves denial of access to services or social benefits, prevention of the exercise and enjoyment of civil, social, economic, cultural and political rights, imposition of criminal penalties, discriminatory practices or physical and psychological harm and tolerance of discriminatory practices, public and private hostility to homosexuals, transsexuals or transvestites.
- iii) Obstructive legislative practice. This means the prevention of the exercise and enjoyment of civil, social, economic, cultural and political rights by women.

According to Bunch (1995), violence against women and girls is the most pervasive violation of human rights in the world today. Its forms are both subtle and blatant and its impact on development is profound. But it is so deeply embedded in cultures around the world that it is almost invisible. A few examples of its perpetration paint a gruesome picture. Roughly 60 million women who should be alive today are "missing" because of gender discrimination, predominantly in South and West Asia, China and North Africa. In the United States of America, where overall violent crimes against women have been growing for the past two decades, a woman is physically abused by her intimate partner every nine seconds. In India, more than 5000 women are killed each year because their in-laws consider their dowries inadequate. In some countries of the Middle East and Latin America, husbands are often exonerated from killing an unfaithful, disobedient or willful wife on the grounds of "honour". Throwing acid to disfigure a woman's face is very common is

Bangladesh and this practice is gaining ground in Nigeria. All over the Third World, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, about 2 million girls each year (6000 every day) are genitally mutilated. More than 1 million children, overwhelmingly female, are forced into prostitution every year, the majority in Asia. In the wake of the AIDS epidemic, younger and younger children are being sought in the belief that they are less likely to be infected.

In Nigeria, domestic violence is widespread and a survey by CLEEN Foundation showed a nationwide increase from 21% in 2011 to 30% in 2013. All the major ethnic groups-Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa-have strong patriarchal societal structures that lead to the justification of domestic violence (Noah, 2000). The Hausa are more supportive of domestic violence as they view it as an inherent right of a husband. Yoruba women refer to their husbands as “He who owns me”, and the same situation practically exists among the Igbo women. In an extreme example that is found amongst the Tiv of Benue State, Nigeria, wife beating is viewed as a “sign of love” that should be encouraged because, according to the women, “If you are not beaten by your husband, then you do not know the joy of marriage and that means that you are not yet married” (Odimegwu, et al., 2010). Therefore, in many cultures where a bride price is paid, it automatically bestows on the husband full ownership of the woman.

In Nigeria, the most common forms of physical violence include rape, murder, slapping and kicking. The major reasons for these types of abuse include drunkenness on the part of the husband, unresolved financial issues and rejection of the partner’s sexual advances. Relationship inequality is also a strong indicator of physical violence. High levels of wife beating occur when the woman is making more money than her husband. This has been attributed to the lack of control the male partner feels within the relationship. Another form of violence which has received a lot of recent attention in Nigeria is acid baths. The perpetrator throws acid onto his/her victim’s body, resulting in disfigurement and possible loss of eyesight. Another cause of domestic violence is infertility: infertile women have reported physical, mental and emotional violence.

Violence against women in the home is generally regarded as belonging to the private sphere in Nigeria and therefore to be shielded from outside scrutiny. A culture of silence reinforces the stigma attached to the victim rather than condemning the perpetrator of such crimes. The police and the courts often dismiss domestic violence as a family matter and refuse to investigate or press charges. A few rape victims who summon up courage to take their cases to court face humiliating rules of evidence and end in victim-blaming. This attitude results in gross underreporting of such events.

Consequences of Gender-Based Violence

The immediate and long-term physical, psychological and social effects of gender-based-violence as outlined by Johnson (2006) include:

- i) Physical-involving injury, disability, chronic health problems, sexual and reproductive health problems and death.
- ii) Psychological-the direct consequences are anxiety, fear, mistrust, inability to concentrate, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, suicide. The indirect consequences may include psychosomatic illnesses, withdrawal, alcohol and drug abuse.
- iii) Economic and social impact include rejection, ostracism and social stigma, reduced ability to engage in productive economic activities, acute fear of future violence, job loss due to absenteeism, poverty and dependence.
- iv) It has its impact on family members and other dependents. It leads to divorce or broken families, retarded economic and emotional development, exposure of children to domestic violence and its collateral effects.
- v) Impact of violence on society over-burdens health and judicial systems, retards social and economic growth and stability, reduces the ability of women to adapt to social, political and economic change, breakdown of trust in social relationships and weakens social support system.
- vi) It equally impacts on the perpetrators who may suffer sanctions by the community, arrest and imprisonment, legal restrictions, alimony and child support payments, feeling of alienation and increased tension in the family relations.

Eliminating Gender-Based Violence: A Thematic Exposition

There are myriads of active women groups and organizations all over the world that seek to end all forms of discrimination and violence against women at different levels. In the international arena, many conferences have been organized to draw attention to the plight of women and what should be done to ameliorate them. These include the Copenhagen Conference in 1980, the World Women's Conference in Nairobi in 1985, the World Conference on Women in Mexico, 1995 and the Beijing Conference of 1995. The most crucial results of these efforts by women is that the UN General Assembly in 2010, decided that it is now the obligation of states to prevent, investigate and punish anyone who violates women's rights in public and private realms. The international community will henceforth deem failure to act as a serious violation legal standards.

The Role of the United Nations Organization

The United Nations has been in the vanguard of the effort to eliminate gender-based violence. The global body has adopted laws at international level and has persistently prodded the member states to domesticate and enforce them. It also persuades regional and sub-regional organizations to adopt and adapt to treaties to suit the peculiarities of their environment. International and local non-governmental organizations, including the media, are also mobilized to end the impunity towards conflict-related sexual offences and making justice available to victims (Global Currents, 2004).

In 1979, the UN General Assembly, by its Resolution 48/104 of 1993, adopted the declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. The body, during its 57th session in 2003, was pessimistic about the progress made and urged member states to strengthen awareness and preventive measures for the elimination of all forms violence against women. It further enjoined governments to involve non-governmental organizations such as women's organizations, community-based organizations and individuals to raise awareness about the economic, social and psychological cost of all forms of violence against women

The Role of the African Union

In response to the call by the United Nations for regional and sub-regional organizations to join or co-operate in the drive towards the elimination of gender-based violence, the A.U. established the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR, 2003). The second ordinary session of the Assembly adopted the protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa. The main thrust of the document includes the elimination of harmful practices against women, the right to participate in politics and decision-making, the right to protect women in armed conflict, the right to education and training, the right to economic and social welfare and protection of widows' rights. Furthermore, the A.U. established the African Court on Human and People's right in enforcing human rights.

The Role of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

ECOWAS joined the overarching regional and global organizations like the U.N. and A.U. in the fight against gender-based violence by establishing a Gender Development Centre in 2003. The Centre initiates, develops facilities and coordinates strategies to improve the living conditions of women. The priority areas include education, health, economy and trades, governance, representation in decision-making, agriculture, peace and security. Furthermore, ECOWAS produced a clear cut empowerment policy framework for women that sought to mainstream gender issues in all its programmes. The major hindrance to meaningful progress towards the elimination of gender-based violence in West Africa is lack of political will and commitment of some member states to domesticate and enforce gender instruments in which they are signatories.

Nigeria's National Gender Policy

This policy was formulated in consonance with the requirement of the United Nations that each member state incorporates the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system to abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women. It is to be followed up with the establishment of public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women from all aspects of discrimination in all spheres of life. Therefore, the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2009 formed

a national gender policy which seeks to build a just and egalitarian society where there is no discrimination. The strategies adopted by the Federal Government in implementing the gender policy include:

- i) Advocacy and social mobilization;
- ii) Sensitization of stakeholder by national, state and local governments;
- iii) Promotion of policies and practices that favour gender equality;
- iv) Formation of sexual harassment policy for educational institutions;
- v) Free medicare for pregnant women and children;
- vi) Formulation of national policy on protection of, and assistance to, victims of trafficking;
- vii) Domestication of the United Nations Convention to eliminate all forms of Discrimination against Women. Most of the treaties on Human Rights and gender equality are already enshrined in the constitution of Federal Government of Nigeria;
- viii) The holistic, multispectral approach of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to gender-based issues.

Unfortunately, the human rights institutions in Nigeria including the National Human Rights Commission, the courts and the Nigeria Police are not effectively living up to their responsibilities.

Eliminating Violence through Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is the systematic incorporation of gender issues in all levels of government and all her policies (Pollack and Hafner-Burton, 2000). It strengthens gender equality through policy and resource allocation that reflects the interests of both men and women. Gender mainstreaming can be specifically achieved through:

- i) Legislations of governments at different levels to make laws that address family violence and abuse, rape sexual assault, female genital mutilation, human trafficking and other forms of abuse. Some of these laws are already enshrined in the Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- ii) Making gender-sensitive policies that provide equal opportunities for men and women in all spheres of life;
- iii) Both local and international 'Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) should use their vast network to create awareness and educate community members on their rights;
- iv) Enabling the human rights institutions like the police, courts, civil society organizations, Human Rights Commission to enforce human rights laws;
- v) Gender awareness training for the criminal justice personnel;
- vi) General advocacy and public education;
- vii) Using international laws to make governments accountable for infringing laws against gender-based violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter noted that it is necessary that both sexes should be involved in finding solutions to male gender norms which associate masculinity with risky behaviour like gender-based violence which hinder the pursuit of the goal of gender equality. Based on this, various recommendations were made on how to minimize the gender-based violence. The result and significance of this study among others include the need to have women representation in various areas so as to enhance capacity building and intellectual recognition that are not embedded in gender discrimination, the need to have laws protecting women from gender-based violence and the need to empower women and have them in power and decision-making situations where they can help to change the situation of things, especially in relation to women abuse and the need for women to be part of key players in conflict resolution. It is our position that women can play a leading role in conflict resolution. This will contribute meaningfully in checking gender-based violence.

To check the menace, the United Nations, regional and sub-regional organizations have produced several treaties and protocols with a view to establishing international laws that address violence against women. The member states are required to domesticate the laws through legislation. Nigeria has not only complied but in addition, has promulgated a national policy on gender matters. Nigeria, through gender streaming, has also incorporated gender issues into national policies and programmes. Though a gradual process, the approach will help to eliminate gender-based stereotypes and foster a culture of fairness and peace.

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