

Examining the Nature and Management of Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Gender-based violence has become one of the main sources of fatalities in most homes across the world. There have been media reports on the increase in the trend of confrontations usually occasioned by intimate partner violence and incompatible goals in homes. Most media reports have shown that religious issues, infidelity, disobedience, poor ethical considerations, dispute over finances, sorcery, intolerance and communication breakdown in the family usually sustain gender-based violence and negative peace, which affect the larger society in different ways. Findings showed that informal peace education and timely third-party intervention by mediation centres would eradicate this ugly trend by shaping people's perceptions of gender relations to translate into positive peace and mutual respect. The culture of peace remains an unparalleled antidote to domestic violence. Government and society at large should invest in empowering women and girls, including those with disabilities, to know their sexual and reproductive rights and how to protect themselves.

Keywords: *Gender-based Violence, Informal Peace Education, Positive Peace, Timely Third-Party Intervention, Poor Ethical Considerations, Negative Peace.*

Introduction

“My husband, the most irresponsible man alive” – Mrs Mojisola Tihamiyu at Lagos Court

“My wife beats me up all the time.” – Mr Johnson Uchenna

“My husband flogs me before my children.” – Mrs Agnes Wali

Gender-based violence is currently one of the threats to sustainable livelihoods across the world. Various clichés are now used to address some gender-related issues, including masculinity, womanism and feminism (Daniels, 2020). Gender-based violence has become a major source of disunity and chaos in many homes. That the manifestation of violence in family relations has become one of the main sources of fatalities in home settings across the country is not disputable, considering various reports on national dailies concerning how intimate partners engage each other in violent confrontations that often hamper cooperation and even lead to death (Lloyd, 2018). Human violence is as old as humankind. The Bible traces violence back to Cain, who was Abel’s brother and the oldest son of the first couple (*The Watchtower*, 1998, p.4). The ugly scenario was occasioned by God’s favour and acceptance of Abel’s offering, which angered Cain to the extent that he launched an assault that led to the death of Abel. The realistic picture of marriage has been painted by the Bible, which states that married people shall have trouble in the flesh, tribulations or pain and grief (I Corinthians 7:28; *Awake*, 2001, p.8). Globally, violence is a source of fear. Consistent beating and violence lead to strife and fear. To a great extent, domestic violence has strained the relationship between members of various families.

One of the main problems of the 21st century is the failure to provide a social atmosphere of peace. Wars, the rebellion of people against authorities and other errors are as old as the history of humankind. This explains why some of the problems that adversely affect the structure of society arise from humans (Bağcı, 2014). Women and children have been identified as the unfortunate victims of violent conflicts (Babatunde, 2012), even though they are sometimes protagonists in family disputes. Oduyoye (2001, p.3) states that African women have had to protest publicly to proclaim their humanity, and to curb the consequences of violence to which they are vulnerable (Akintunde, 2002). The family is the first agent of socialisation across the world. However, there are media reports of the upsurge in confrontations usually occasioned by intimate partner violence and incompatible goals in the family institution. Many media reports have shown that religious issues, infidelity, disobedience, poor ethical considerations, dispute over finances, sorcery, intolerance and communication breakdown in the family sustain the atmosphere of violence and negative peace, which affect the larger society in different ways.

Violence is a cancerous behaviour that is not peculiar to families alone. The public sphere has become a turbulent space across the world, usually characterised by banditry, smuggling, police violence and other types of crime. The protagonists in every family dispute are wives, husbands and sometimes children and in-laws. It has been noted that African women have been engaging in a wide variety of livelihoods to support

themselves and their families, with the primary responsibility of raising children. They have succeeded in establishing households that showed continuity and change from rural family formations (Sheldon, 1996). Violence could be a response to poor communication or displeasure over individual or group actions or frustration-aggression against perceived oppression. Although violence is often deployed as a means of resolving disagreements between two parties, it has many times proven to be quite ineffective and detrimental to sustainable development of society (Ropers & Klingebiel, 2002; National Research Council, 1998). Violence is often destructive when taken to the extreme. It is also a deviant behaviour that affects the target person.

Conceptual Explanations

Violence has been defined by several individuals and organizations. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines violence as “violent behaviour that is intended to hurt or kill; physical or emotional force and energy.” The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, whether threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or a group or community, which results in or has the potential to result in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation (WHO, 2002). The United Nations Ending Violence against Women, from Words to Action describes “violence against women as a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between women and men” (UN Women, 2011).

Gender-based violence (GBV) is broadly described as any form of sexual, physical, emotional, or psychological harm against a woman. Violence against women, according to the United Nations General Assembly's 1993 declaration, "means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is 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 actually taking place in public or private life" (Article 1, pp. 3-4). Gender-based violence is not one-sided; it involves both males and females, but most females are the worst hit going to statistics.

Gender identifies a set of sexes, which is frequently impacted by cultural influences, such as religion, politics, social issues and education (Agu, 2007). According to Mutunga (2006), gender is a socially constructed identity in which roles are allocated at various levels, which can vary depending on culture and can be changed by factors such as conflict situations and decision-making. In other words, it refers to social characteristics that are needed or learnt through socialization and it defines activities, obligations and demands associated with being male or female rather than biological identity linked with masculinity or femininity. Mutunga (2006) expands on the learned characteristics of men and women, which are frequently described as power, positions, resources, and privileges.

Domestic Violence: This is a type of attack on an individual or members of a family in the home by a member or members of the family. According to Akinlemo (2005),

domestic violence is physical, emotional, sexual or economic abuse between intimate partners, possibly between a husband and a wife, and sometimes abuse of domestic help by wives or other members of the host family.

Gender Analysis Framework

The gender analysis framework can be approached through different perspectives but this paper adopts three perspectives within the gender analysis framework, namely equality and empowerment, social relations, and gender roles. Both men and women can execute different roles. This underscores their relevance in various areas of life. Since men and women complement each other, neither is superior to the other as far as the survival of humanity is concerned. The equality and empowerment of women remain sacrosanct for the promotion of sustainable and healthy living, just like the issue of recognizing the significant roles of each gender is important. Frieslaar and Masango (2021) identify *lobola* as a cultural practice that aids men's dominance over women; they argue that:

...cultural practices or gender norms of lobola motivated men to believe that they have a sense of total ownership of women. Several African countries report a traditional practice where a man pays substantial amounts of money or large herds of cattle, sheep and goats to a girl's parents before marriage. This is the African cultural practice known as 'lobola'. This cultural practice or gender norm of lobola has led to men believing that they have a sense of total ownership of women.

Nature and Sources of Gender-based Violence

Gender-based violence, whether in the home setting or public space, is one of the current challenges against the peaceful coexistence of many families. This phenomenon has become so rampant and has dragged many homes into chaos through many negative signals. Wife battering is the most common form of domestic violence and the hobby of some men (Onwubike, 2001). Mallam Bukhari, the Executive Secretary of the National Human Rights Commission, noted that “domestic violence is rampant all over the world, causing grievous bodily harm to people as a criminal offence” (*New Nigerian*, 2003, p.2).

The two major religions in Nigeria, Christianity and Islam, abhor gender-based violence (Akinlemo, 2005). The most central promise of any religion, whether Western or African, “is peace between man and God or amongst human beings” (Albert 2017, p. 52). The nature of domestic violence in Nigeria is very complex and is sometimes directly linked with its causes. This phenomenon, in the words of Alhaji Suleiman Gambo, is occasioned by the immaturity of family members in handling domestic problems and could lead to eventual divorce if not resolved properly (*New Nigerian*, 2003, p. 12). In essence, gender-based violence in Nigeria emanates from and manifests in reactions to issues at stake. This is why violence against women and men is classified as physical, economic and emotional (Akinlewo, 2005.p.21). The table below offers more insights into this.

Table 1: Nature and Effect of Gender-based Violence

Type of Gender-based Violence	Nature of Violence	Effects of such actions
Physical violence	Wife/husband battering	It could lead to violence and sorrow, untimely death or separation/divorce; and poor upbringing of children.
Economic violence	Monetary punishment	It can frustrate the woman into the hands of other men in search of the good things in life (excessive materialism is seen as the driver of this action). It can affect food security and livelihood.
Emotional violence	Denial of sex, shouting, and unnecessary complaint that heightens grievance among any member or some members of a family.	Low self-esteem, frustration, and eventual divorce create risk and a perception of insecurity.
University terrorism	Use of cultists or security officers to unleash terror on students and lecturers	Hostility perception, fear in social life; creation of a negative peace atmosphere through militarism; waste of time and resources which would have been expended on human development; denial of freedom and violation of human rights and dignity; hooliganism

Source: Authors' compilation from key informant interviews (2022)

A family-based conflict turns into domestic violence only when it inflicts bodily, economic or emotional pains on any of the members. The table above shows that the protagonists are usually the man and his wife, while other third parties (children or relatives) may be involved in escalating or de-escalating the conflict. The locations of gender-based violence are homes, churches, schools, farms, markets, streets, offices, clubs, and sports centres, among others. For instance, women are sometimes attacked and targeted at churches and clubs; rape or physical abuse could result if this is not prevented. This threat is more problematic for those with disabilities. According to reports, there are more than a billion people worldwide who have some sort of impairment, including 220 million young people with impairments. World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank World Report on Disability indicated that the global disability rate among females is 19.2 per cent, with most of them living in developing nations (WHO, 2011).

Violence against women and girls with disabilities includes the following: sexual and physical violence, discrimination, stigma and misconception, discrimination from a very tender age, exclusion from family planning, and exclusion from reproductive health and sexual education, which would have enhanced their awareness of the risk associated with uncontrolled sexual practices. These forms of violence make disabled girls and women more vulnerable, with a higher risk of violence.

Risk Indicators for Gender Abuse in Home Settings

The following are risk indicators for physical and emotional abuse at home as outlined in a study conducted by Richard J. Gelles at the University of Rhodes Island, USA.:

- i. The man has a history of domestic violence;
- ii. He is unemployed;
- iii. He uses illegal drugs at least once a year;
- iv. When he lived at home, he saw his father hit his mother;
- v. The couple is not married; they cohabit;
- vi. If employed, he has a low-paying job;
- vii. He did not complete high school;
- viii. He is between the ages of 18 and 30 (*Awake*, 2001, p.7);
- ix. One or both use violence toward children in the home;
- x. Income is below the poverty level;
- xi. The man and woman are from different cultural backgrounds (*Awake*, 2001, p.7);
- xii. Ignorance and illusion;
- xiii. Lesbianism;
- xiv. Bisexuality;
- xv. Rape;
- xvi. Indecent dressing;
- xvii. Sexual harassment;
- xviii. Bet;
- xix. Complacency;
- xx. Character assassination;
- xxi. Frustration and aggression;
- xxii. Vices and viruses of ethnocentrism;
- xxiii. Religion and poor hygiene culture; and
- xxiv. Living with grievances.

However, women are not the sole victims of domestic violence; men are also affected by this menace. For instance, in *Sunday Sun* (25 March 2007, p. 26), Olaifa reported the case of a 39-year-old carpenter named Olatunbosun Adekoya, whose wife usually flogged and denied sex with the excuse of being tired. At the end of the hearing at the Igando Grade "B" Customary Court, the marriage was dissolved and the custody of two out of their three children was given to the man, while the youngest child was given

to the respondent for motherly care (Olaifa, 2007, p. 26). But the rate at which such incident happens is minimal, and, in most cases, men refrain from reporting such to prevent them from being laughed at (*Nigerian Tribune*, 2005, p.2). Litigation does not address family disputes without grievance or loss by one of the parties to the dispute.

In the pre-independence era, divorce was recognized based on some factors; it may be granted on any of the following:

1. In respect of an application for divorce by a woman:
 - a. Impotency of the husband;
 - b. Venereal disease contracted by the husband;
 - c. Leprosy or other chronic and contagious diseases contracted by the husband;
 - d. Conviction of the husband for a crime involving a sentence of at least five years' imprisonment;
 - e. Such misconduct by the husband as cruelty, neglect of the wife or desertion;
 - f. Lunacy of the husband for more than three years; and
 - g. Adultery by the husband.
2. In respect of an application for divorce by a man:
 - a. Leprosy or other chronic and contagious diseases contracted by the wife;
 - b. Desertion of the husband by the wife;
 - c. Conviction of the wife of a crime involving a sentence of more than three years' imprisonment;
 - d. Such misconduct by the wife as neglect of the children or the husband;
 - e. Adultery by the wife (NAI, A.G.312/6. 1952. Local Government Leg. Owa Local Council Marriage Divorce and Custody of Children, Bye Laws p. 3-4.).

Provided that no dowry shall be refundable in the case of a woman divorced on the grounds of having contracted leprosy; provided also that in the case of a girl whose marriage has not been consummated, or a widow who has been inherited from a relative, divorce shall be granted on application, subject to bye-laws (NAI, A.G.312/6. 1952. Local Government Leg. Owa Local Council Marriage Divorce and Custody of Children, Bye Laws p. 3-4).

In Yoruba traditional society, marriage lasted for a lifetime despite occasional bickering and quarrels between partners (Fadipe, 1970). It was indeed "till death do us part", as contained in the Holy Bible. On divorce, a woman could divorce her husband for habitual laziness, drunkenness, bad company and infectious disease; impotence was usually not a cause for divorce, perhaps because of the custom forbidding re-marriage of a woman (Fadipe, 1970, p.90).

However, in contemporary Nigerian society, it has been discovered that, months after a marriage has been consummated in some families, divorce sets in owing to intolerance and seemingly unsettled issues. As asserted by Alhaji Jamiu Lasisi:

When a marriage is based on money, such a marriage is bound to crash or more likely going to have problems when money is no longer there. Any marriage that is rooted in money cannot

stand the test of time....that is why we cautioned that the love of money is the root of all evil. Mothers who advise their daughters to use wealth as a parameter in their choice of men don't consider the joy of their daughters in their matrimonial homes. The implication of using money as a yardstick is that no husband will have respect for such a wife....That is why you see some men beat up their wives. This is so because, when a man realizes that his woman is marrying him because of his money, he would be tempted to beat the woman at the slightest provocation (Amos, 2006, p.46).

Sex too is a factor that can make or mar a marriage; one of the things that make marriages crash is sex. When a man is not getting enough of it from his wife, a problem starts. It shows that the woman is not capable of satisfying her husband. Women should try to look into the complaints of their husbands, starting from their dishes to personal hygiene and even bed matters. Divorce does not favour women, because it is one of the major things that tear the fibre of love and unity in society (Amos, 2006). The problem with domestic violence and the divorce associated with it is that they portray marriage as a covenant that is not honourable, thereby depicting the family as an unstable institution. Gender-based violence manifests from a situation of unequal power relations between members of a family, particularly between the husband and the wife or among wives, where the "senior madam" or "over-pampered junior wife" lords it over the other wife or wives in the home (Akinlomo, 2005). Rejection of entreaties from neighbours leads to the death of wives after a scuffle with the husbands in some families that fail to avoid domestic violence (Adetayo, 2006). Such scuffles are also caused by the act of wife battering.

The statistics revealed by the then Minister of Women Affairs, Hajia Maryam Ciroma, after a survey on harmful traditional practices affecting women and children in Nigeria, indicates that the south-eastern part of Nigeria led other zones of the country in wife battering, with 85.7%; the south-western part had 41.7 %; the South-south had 26.1%; the North-central had 17.7%; the Northeast had 13.3%; while the Northwest had 4.3% (Laleye, 2005).

Spousal abuse is one of the major drivers of domestic violence. However, intimate partner disputes, provocation, resentment and nursing of anger by couples are responsible for protracted family conflicts that escalate into domestic violence. Most of these culminate in wife battering and reckless lifestyles among men. When members of a family find it difficult to tell the truth, conflict that could lead to violence may manifest. The display of irresponsibility by her husband through the desertion of the family and inability to cater for children's upkeep, health and education forced a woman to approach a Lagos court seeking a divorce in suit A/21/207 (Biobaku, 2007).

The sources of domestic violence are numerous. The major sources are examined below:

Mothers-in-law: One of the major sources of domestic violence in the home setting is the avoidable struggle between mothers-in-law and wives over the control of the husbands/sons. In a family, for instance, the inability of a mother-in-law to realize the new position of a wife usually ignites competition between the two of them. This would continually lead to chaos that might even result in the husband attacking the wife to please his mother. There were incidents where some men physically assaulted their wives as a result of their confrontations with their in-laws.

Finance: Money is the basic necessity with which the home is run. The inability of the husband to make adequate financial and material provisions in the home might lead to domestic violence.

Sexual satisfaction: The failure on the part of the wife to fulfil her marital duty of satisfying the sexual pleasure of her spouse based on constant excuses might bring about strife in the home. This problem could be further aggravated by the loss of passion by either of the partners.

Gender Discrimination as Violence

An area often neglected in gender-based violence is professional gender discrimination. A clear instance is the case of females in law enforcement agencies. There are many discriminatory laws against women in the police, the armed forces and the like.

Discriminatory Rules against Female Police Officers

Female police officers are discriminated against under Nigerian Police Act 1 Rules 121, 122, 125, and 126. Rule 121 indicates that women police officers must ask for permission to marry. Section 125 of the regulation states that married women police will not be allowed special benefits and that pregnant married woman police may or may not be granted maternity leave. In addition, Section 126 states that "any unmarried female police officer who becomes pregnant shall be expelled from the Force and shall not be re-enlisted except with the authorization of the Inspector General of Police (IGP)." On the 26th of January 2021, an unmarried female police officer named Omolola Olajide was discharged in Ekiti State for becoming pregnant (Joseph Onyekwere, *The Guardian*, February 2, 2021).

Also, the Federal Character Commission (Establishment) Act 2004 provides that "a married woman shall continue to lay claim to her state of origin for implementation of the Federal Character Formulae at the National Level." According to Regulation 124 of the Act, a female police officer must apply in writing to the Commissioner of Police of the state police command where she is serving for permission to marry. The written application must include the name, residence and occupation of the person she plans to marry. The provision further notes that the marriage will be permitted provided the potential husband is of good character and the woman police officer has been in the force for at least three years. This part implies that a female police officer in Nigeria will be barred from marrying within three years after joining the Nigeria Police Force.

Discrimination on Appointment

Concerning appointments in the military or paramilitary establishments, no female has occupied the highest position, such as Chief of Defence Staff, Chief of Army Staff, Chief of Naval Staff, Chief of Air Staff or Inspector General of Police in Nigeria. Since the inception of the Nigerian Navy, it has only produced only one female Real Admiral, in the person of Real Admiral Ituru Hotonu.

Effects of Gender-based Violence on Persons with Disabilities

There are a lot of consequences of gender-based violence on persons with disabilities. The two major ones are human rights and health consequences.

Human rights violations: Gender-based violence is a major human rights issue. People who are victims of gender-based violence may be subjected to a variety of human rights breaches. Examples include issues around the right to life, freedom from torture and degrading treatment, forced sterilization for under-aged girls with disabilities, invasive vaginal examinations (such as those performed on Afghan women to test virginity every time a girl is arrested on moral grounds), modern human trafficking, freedom from discrimination, and the right to safety and security are all examples. Disability is a global issue that is often exacerbated by the fear of gender-based violence.

Health Consequences: Disabled people have the same medical needs as anyone, especially as they become older; they require the same diagnostic, preventive, and well-being treatment that everyone else does. Persons with disabilities are not always provided with the same range, quality, and standard of free or low-cost healthcare programmes as people without disabilities. Research has shown that people with disabilities receive lower healthcare services and, as a result, have poorer health outcomes.

Persons with disabilities are also more vulnerable to deficiencies in healthcare services, which increase their risk of secondary, co-morbid and age-related conditions. For example, women with disabilities receive fewer screenings for breast and cervical cancers than women without disabilities. Similarly, persons with intellectual impairments and diabetes are less likely to have their weight checked (Krahn, Walker, & Correa-De-Araujo, 2015). The Disability Rights Commission (2006) in the UK conducted a formal investigation into inequalities in health and found that “people with mental illness and people with intellectual impairments not only experienced more ill-health, but received a poor service from health professionals and as a consequence they had higher rates of morbidity and mortality” (cited in Samele, Seymour, Morris, Central England People First, Cohen & Emerson 2006).’

Other consequences are divorce and possible separation for years. Death or homicide may also result.

Global Prevalence of Gender-based Violence among People with Disabilities

Both men and women with disabilities experience gender-based violence, but women and girls with disabilities are at higher risk. Across the globe, studies have revealed staggering and terrifying facts on violence against women and girls. Evidence

showed that girls and young women with disabilities may face up to 10 times more violence than men with disabilities and even up to 10 times more than women and girls without disabilities. Millions of persons with disabilities worldwide suffer from physical, social, economic, cultural and legal barriers that limit their access to education and healthcare, including sexual and reproductive health, employment, care and protection systems. These put them at a greater risk of living in poverty and make them more vulnerable to violence, including gender-based violence (UNFPA, 2018).

Persons with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty and have low education levels. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank's World Report on Disability, the disability rate among females worldwide is 19.2 per cent, with the majority living in developing countries. The most vulnerable to violence among persons with disabilities are children with autism and those with hearing, visual, psychosocial or intellectual disabilities. Much of the violence against these people goes unreported and unpunished.

Management of Gender-based Violence

Gender-based violence inspires rebellion in the home, either mother against father or father against children and mother. Since domestic violence is cancerous to family relations, it requires an adequate and timely response. It is necessary to enhance the awareness of women and men about the Gender Thematic Trust Fund (GTTF) established by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to achieve a wide range of goals on how to enhance equality globally. The United Nations Development Programme revealed that the UNDP Gender Thematic Trust Fund has received nearly USD\$11 million and has funded projects in over 70 countries. The fund encouraged building of capacities for gender mainstreaming and analysis in all areas of UNDP's work and strengthening inter-agency collaboration. Using this aspect of gender issues can promote women's advocacy programmes in the areas of equal educational opportunities and Sustainable Development Goals for women and children, particularly poverty reduction and maternal healthcare.

It has been noted that men are major stakeholders in the elimination of domestic violence in Nigeria through resolving to adopt non-violence in handling family disputes (*Nigerian Tribune*, 23 August 2005). This is premised on the fact that men are often the main protagonists in every domestic matter that could escalate into violent responses from members of the family. Advocacy for tolerance in the home has also been identified as a panacea for domestic violence by the staff of Nigeria Watch in their response to interview questions. Nigeria Watch is an organisation that analyses violent deaths in the country.

Also, engaging family members in professional counselling is an effective violence-prevention mechanism because it can transform the perceptions of people. To support this counselling-oriented peace education, eradication of domestic violence must be anchored to the charge in the book of Ephesians 5:28- 29: "Husbands ought to be loving their wives as their bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself, for no man ever

hated his own flesh; but he feeds and cherishes it, as the Christ also does the congregation” (New King James Version, 1982). If all men in Nigeria adhere to this directive, most families would experience soothing tranquillity.

In stable homes, the husband and wife have learned to talk about their problems without becoming intimate enemies (Awake, 2001). Family intervention, avoidance of violence, proper management of in-laws, proper communication and respect for all family members are necessary in the prevention and management of gender-based violence. Not many troubled families are aware of the existence of mediation centres to fill the gap in nonviolent approaches to third-party intervention that would produce a win-win outcome.

The findings from key informant interviews with information retrieval specialists at Nigeria Watch, comprising experienced couples, the clergy and selected marriage counsellors showed that informal peace education and timely third-party intervention by mediation centres could eradicate this ugly trend. It could shape people's perceptions of family relations, which would translate into positive peace and mutual respect. In addition, timely provision of individual needs in the family can prevent any form of confrontation that would lead to violent conflicts between family members. Peace culture remains an unparalleled antidote to domestic violence in Nigeria, especially when adopted as a way of life at the family level.

The keys to controlling violent tendencies in men are negotiation, compromise, empathy and forgiveness (*The Watchtower*, 1998). A successful marriage depends on a husband and wife working together in unison, giving priority to wholesome communication, which is made possible by confidence, trust, and mutual understanding (*The Watchtower*, 1999, p.21). Wholesome communication is one of the attributes of peace education, either formal or informal. Where such qualities exist, it is difficult for disputes to escalate into violence. Given their active support in family growth and development, especially in raising children, which helps continuity and change in the home, women deserve to be treated with respect and protected from the drivers of physical, economic and emotional violence. Instead of inflicting pain on women, men should assist in positively shaping their perceptions about family life and promoting the culture of peaceful management of relations.

Conclusion

Gender-based violence affects men and women. Many men have died through confrontations with their wives or female relatives. The menace is more dangerous than the Coronavirus pandemic since it wreaks havoc on the family, the platform upon which societal development plans are built. Separation in the form of divorce is also an ugly consequence of violence. This makes it pertinent for every member of society to promote peace education. Any family that upholds respect for values will have the capacity to manage disputes at the latent stage.

No matter the degree of professional counselling, to curb the menace of gender-based violence in Nigerian families, which seems to affect females more than males,

peace education remains a veritable containment strategy. Love and gratitude are significant in sustaining the achievements of peace education and violence prevention in the home. Litigation is not an effective management of disputes at the family level because of its apparent win-lose outcome. Therefore, mediation centres ought to be given adequate attention.

Violence can be stopped if every stakeholder gets involved to ensure that it comes to an end. Government agencies, non-governmental organisations, civil society and development partners can do a whole lot to ensure that no woman or girl is left behind in the work to end gender-based violence. For too long violence against females with disabilities has been an issue surrounded by silence. The time has come to raise more awareness and ramp up efforts to create deep and long-lasting change for those women and girls that have been left behind.

Recommendations

There are so many conventions and treaties aimed at preventing and eliminating violence against women. Such laws include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), whose Article 2 provides thus: “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedom set forth in this declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, political or other options, national or social origin, property, birth or another status.” The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAN), Article 1, also provides that states must “exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and by national legislation, punish acts of violence against women, whether those acts are perpetrated by the state or by private persons.”

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Article I, provides that “violence against women is an abuse of the human rights of the women. Women's rights were accorded the status of human rights.” The Vienna Declaration, Article 18, notes that “the human rights of women and the girl-child are an inalienable, integral, individual and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life at the national and international levels and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on all grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community.”

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended, section 42, provides and guarantees freedom from discrimination to every Nigerian irrespective of sex or gender. Section 34 provides for the right to dignity and prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment. Enforcing these conventions strictly will go a long way in preventing all forms of violence against women. More strategic, pragmatic and cohesive approach is needed from the government and the general public in this regard. The government should domesticate these conventions and treaties to facilitate their implementation. There should be a massive campaign by all stakeholders to sensitize the public to the effect of this epidemic. The National Orientation Agency and other related agencies should braze up to this task. Enlightenment on issues of discrimination against

women and girls and punishing its breach in very clear and unmistakable terms are crucial. Education will also make everyone united in this cause and see the task as a collective responsibility. There should also be a change in culturally entrenched stereotypes. Men should be made to see their female children as equal to the males and give them equal opportunities. Parents should also share their property equally, irrespective of gender.

In addition, there should be zero tolerance for violence by all members of society. Violent behaviour by men should be condemned and challenged by the public. The culture of silence should be discouraged; women should be encouraged to speak out and be protected by the government and society at large. The legislature at all levels in Nigeria should be more gender-friendly, conscious and proactive in this task. This issue can no longer be glossed over; it should be deliberated upon and consciously tackled by innovative legislation, and positive and faithful implementation of the 35% affirmative action, the outcome of the Beijing Conference. The current crisis at the Nigeria's National Assembly on Gender Bill is uncalled for. The National Assembly should take the lead in attending positively to gender bills while other African countries follow.

The judiciary at all levels must activate and bring down the full weight of the law in its adjudication on all unconstitutional and unjustifiable discriminatory practices against women and the girls. Nigerian courts must utilize the limits and, where permissible, expand the frontiers of the nation's laws for optimal results to wipe out inequalities and discrimination against women and girls. The press, the fourth estate, needs to address issues of family. This is because, in real life, it is the microcosm of society that makes or mars society. The fundamental issues of violence, discrimination and inequality between men and women must consistently be given prominence in reportage and news. To ensure that long-lasting solutions and changes are created to fight this menace, the following are also imperative:

Governments in Africa and beyond should develop and implement legislation to address violence against women and girls with disabilities. Also, they should criminalize all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse against children and should take concrete measures designed to prioritize the best interests of children.

Governments should ensure that women and girls with disabilities are included in gender-based violence prevention and response programmes.

Government and society at large should invest in empowering women and girls with disabilities to know their sexual and reproductive rights and how to protect themselves.

Data on different forms of violence experienced by women and girls can be improved so that evidence-based interventions that can reduce incidences of violence can be carried out. This can bring about a sustainable change in the lives of women and girls with disabilities.

Governments should also actively and purposefully include violence against women and girls with disabilities in developmental projects.

Eradicating gender-based violence requires peace education. The essence of peace education in every society is to establish a foundation of peaceful management of intergroup relations and create a society where violence is avoided. The purpose of every education is to bring about transformation which will empower the beneficiaries with the needed skills to proffer solutions to issues of concern to society. Peacebuilding is a response to the threats of conflict which are usually destructive to tranquillity and development. Consistent peacebuilding could prevent violent conflicts, discourage human rights abuses, promote nonviolent behaviour and peaceful management of misunderstanding.

This makes it crucial for policymakers and implementers to prioritize values and character education, skills or emotional intelligence, and financial education to reform the mindsets, values, attitudes and behaviours of people towards the prevention, management and transformation of gender-based violence in Nigeria. Nwobueze (2021) states that education is a reliable antidote to violence and intergroup conflicts that now delay development in Nigeria.

Every citizen must be made to appreciate the benefits of living peacefully with others rather than seeing confrontation, which usually leads to conflict, as a solution to the problems inherent in human relations. Since the consequences of violent conflicts spare no one, peace-building education has the highest probability to fit the realities thrown up by constraints to character and knowledge development. With track five, youths and other targets of peace-building will comprehend the problem and solving aspects of peacebuilding where they get adequate knowledge of collaboration and consensus building. This model will result in peace outcomes.

The empowerment of the individual is embedded in the empowerment of others in the community. Empowerment involves mutual dependence. Leaders should mobilize people to take up productive activities through a vision to boost the country's development. We strongly advocate that wives of both junior and senior officer must be members of the associations meant for the wives of officers, such as the Police Officers Women Association (POWA) and Nigeria Army Officers Women Association (NAOWA). Through these associations, women will be able to present common positions on issues that affect women and fight gender-based violence among the officers and their spouses.

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