

Gender-based Violence Experiences and Reactions in Ibadan Metropolis Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Gender-based violence has become a part of human society for a fairly long time. Many local and international treaties have been signed and various national policies pursued. These efforts are yet to yield the positive result of equality for women with men in social, political and economic spheres. Culture and socialization process have not helped in making this achievable. This study was carried out to investigate victim's responses against gender-based violence among 327 respondents in Ibadan, Nigeria. Findings revealed that 68.5% respondents who reportedly reacted to non-physical gender-based violence left redress for God; only 7.3% of the respondents took legal action and 9.7% reportedly fought the perpetrators of such actions. In effect, 83% of the perpetrators are likely to continue such an act. Affected individuals should be encouraged to seek legal redress through media and local initiatives which are pivotal in achieving gender equality, nay Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Keywords: Gender-based violence, Women health, Victims, Non-physical violence, Local initiatives, and Nigeria

Aims Research Journal Reference Format:

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1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Gender-based violence is a key health risk for women globally. Violence against women is now widely recognized as a serious human right abuse, and an important public health problem with substantial consequences – physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health (WHO, 2005 and Dunkle et al, 2004). Despite the fact that Nigeria is a signatory to almost all of the international conventions on women's rights, which heralded the national gender policy to promote gender equity, her efforts have not translated into the expected social sphere for the women folk (Country Information and Guidance, 2015 & Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey NDHS, 2013). Women, as a result, continue to be at the receiving end of violence in Nigeria (Oladeji, 2013 & Okemgbo et al, 2002). For instance, women are regarded as objects to be used for pleasure, temptation and elimination (NDHS, 2013). Also, Arisi and Oromareghake (2011) report men's double standard against women. While the concept 'women' is used generically for females (George, 2015). Studies affirm that gender violence is shockingly high and not limited to Nigeria (NDHS, 2013). The improvement of the socio-economic status of women and professional counselling will reduce significantly the incidence of violence against women (Oluremi, 2015; Oladejo, Yusuf & Arulogun, 2011 and Adekeye, Abimbola & Adeusi, 2011).

Gender-based violence impeded the MDGs for women and girls (Saferworld, 2015) and currently affecting Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically, this violence includes women's double burden of productive and reproductive labour; the number of women dependents (including the injured and orphaned); the diseased and malnourished women and girls (Saferworld, 2015; Ormhaug, Meier and Hernes, 2009 & Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002). In domestic violence, NDHS 2013 reported that justification for battering women by their spouses includes: 'argues with him', 'burns food', 'goes out without telling him', 'neglects the children' and 'refusal of sex'. The absence of national laws criminalizing gender-based violence has not helped and some federal laws even allow such violence. For example, the law permits husbands to use physical means to chastise their wives as long as it does not result in 'grievous harm', which is defined as loss of sight, hearing, or speech; facial disfigurement; or life-threatening injuries (Alokan, 2013). In effect, this does not exempt any category of women whether employed or not (Adekeye, Abimbola & Adeusi, 2011).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

History, from African cultural perspective, has it that the Nigerian woman is regarded as a divine being with a noble role of motherhood and never as "rib", "an appendage" or "afterthought to man" (Ivan, 1988). Thus, there is no important facet in Nigerian life where women have not been fully represented. The so-called domestic violence and crime against women, therefore, may be a behavioural pattern that is adapted in a disaggregated environment which is essentially devoid of the "intention to harm" (Abdullahi, 2003). Traditionally in Nigeria, like other African countries, children and women battering is regarded as a corrective measure (UNICEF 2001). This portrays violence against women in a non-violent way. However, it will be injurious to assume violence against women is harmless in this era when structural violence and systematic discrimination against women manifest continuously (Idoko et al, 2015; Fisher et al, 2012 & Odimegwu and Okemgbo, 2003 and Raj et al 2015). Similarly, intimate partner violence (IPV) is both a human rights issue, driven by stigmatization, and an important public health concern (Maxwell et al, 2015; Idoko et al, 2015; CIG, 2015 Devries et al, 2013).

Women's socialization has not helped the prevalence of violence against them. In the Gambia for instance, 80% of women believe it is acceptable for a man to beat his wife thus encouraging the perpetration of violence against the women (Idoko et al, 2015). Such beliefs maintain the frequency, severity of variation in violence and allow the control of victims through fear and intimidation which might preclude victims' reaction against violence. Violence against women manifests in various ways. Some of these are high domestic violence, rape, sorcery, physical abuse, verbal abuse, incest, female genital cutting/mutilation (FGC/M), denial of food, denial of time for relaxation, etc. (George, 2015, Ola, 2013 & Joda et al. 2007).

It is worthy of note that violence is not attributable to cases involving women folk alone, as there is no category of persons that cannot be subjected to violence. However, violence against females is prevalent because they are considered to be the weaker sex and are easier targets worsened by the culture of silence (George, 2015 and Idoko et al, 2015). Nwammuo (2013) indicates the social media as a tool used to perpetuate gender-based violence. Previous studies on gender-based violence are relevant yet they have not described the victims' responses to non-physical gender-based violence. Thus, the thrust of this study is to investigate awareness, causes, effects and responses of victims to non-physical gender-based violence in the study area.

1.2 Objective

The main objective of this study is to assess the respondents' responses to gender-based violence as a way-out of gender-based violence in Oyo State. Specifically, the study will make enquiries about the level of awareness, effects of and eventual victims' responses to non-physical gender-based violence.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 The Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative research method. Cross-sectional analyses were conducted in Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State. Ibadan is made up of 11 local government areas (LGAs) with a population of about 2,550,593 (NPC, 2006). A more recent data from the National Population Census (NPC) Office in Ibadan put an estimated population of the city at 3,232,016 in 2014. Six LGAs are semi-urban and five are urban (Wikipedia, 2016). Two LGAs – Oluyole and Ibadan South-East – were chosen for the study, a local government from each of the categories. For semi-urban category, Oluyole has 10 political wards and its headquarters is located at Idi Ayunre. It has an area of 629km² and the second largest population of 734,377 in Oyo State (Oyo State web 2016). In the urban category, Ibadan South-East headquartered in Mapo was selected, with 266,457 people and 12 political wards.

The study adopted multi-stage sampling techniques. Out of 22 political wards in both local governments, six political wards were selected through systematic sampling method. Political wards were arranged in ascending order. The political wards that fell as number three in the two areas were selected. In all, two political wards were selected from the two LGAs which were segregated into clusters to avoid double counting of interviews. One hundred and seven-five questionnaires were administered in each of the political wards making three hundred and fifty in all. However, out of the 350 questionnaires administered, only 327 (93.4%) were returned and used for the analysis. The consent of the potential respondents was sought while those who were not interested were left politely.

4. DATA PRESENTATION

Data were cleaned on a daily basis to avoid inconsistencies and kept in a safe place. Data were coded and analysed using Statistical Packages for Social Scientist (SPSS) Software version 21. Variables and categories were generated in order to measure the relationship between variables of interest and data were analysed using simple descriptive statistics.

Table 1 shows information on the socio-demographic profile of the 327 respondents in the study. About 67% were female while the age of all respondents ranged between 20 - 59 years (mean age was 35). Marital status shows that majority (70%) were reportedly married, while 25% were unmarried. The majority (59 %) were Christians while 38% were Moslems. Most of the respondents (62%) had Ordinary National Diploma (OND) or National Certificate of Education (NCE) as the highest educational level attained. Only 3.7% were Primary Six Leaving Certificate holders. Expectedly, Yoruba respondents constituted the majority (81.8%) of the respondents since the study was conducted in a location inhabited predominantly by the Yoruba people. The occupational distribution of the respondents shows that the majority (77%) were government employees. This shows that majority of the respondents are working class.

Table 1. Selected socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	109	33.3
Female	218	67.7
Age		
20-29 years	89	29.5
30-39 years	135	44.7
40-49 years	57	18.9
50-59 years	20	6.6
60-69 years	1	0.3
Marital Status		
Married	229	70.03
Single	82	25.07
Divorced	6	1.84
Cohabit	6	1.84
Widow	4	1.22
Religious Affiliation		
Christianity	193	59.02
Islam	127	38.84
Indigenous Religious	7	2.14
Educational Level		
Primary Level	12	3.67
Secondary	33	10.09
NCE/OND Level	189	62.6
HND/B.Sc/	74	24.5
MS.c/PhD	19	6.3
Ethnic group		
Hausa	20	6.6
Igbo	35	11.6
Yoruba	247	81.8
Occupation		
Civil servant	252	77.06
Business	63	20.86
Full house wife	9	2.75
Others	3	0.92
Total	327	100

4.1 Respondents' perception and experience of gender-based violence (GBV)

Respondents' perception of gender violence indicates that there are various factors responsible for violence against women. Table 2 shows that slightly above a quarter (29.6%) of the respondents reportedly asserted indecent dressing as a cause of GBV, followed by misunderstanding (22.6%), while 12.8% picked illiteracy also as the common cause. Table 2 shows the rate of occurrence of GBV. About 15.9% of the respondents reported that GBV occurred very often, 27.9% agreed that GBV was moderate, while 22.3% maintained that GBV did not occur. However some of the respondents that believed GBV did not occur yet stated the likely causes of GBV. The trend still continues when the respondents were asked about their exposure to GBV. A little below three-quarter (65.2%) indicated their exposure to GBV. Table 2 point out that slightly above three-quarters (68.1%) of the respondents within age range 15 - 29 years were reportedly exposed to GBV followed by respondents within age range 5 - 14 years (15.9%). This shows that majority of GBV occurred between age 5 to 29 years among the respondents.

Table 2: Respondents' Perception and Experience of Gender-Based Violence

Causes of gender violence (N=327)	Frequency	Percentage
Indecent dressing	97	29.6
Misunderstanding	74	22.6
Illiteracy	42	12.8
Discrimination	29	8.9
Poverty	22	6.7
Infidelity	16	4.9
Unemployment	14	4.3
Broken homes	8	2.5
Carelessness	8	2.5
Struggles for survival	8	2.5
Aggression	5	1.5
Age	4	1.2
Frequency of Gender Violence (N=327)		
Very often	52	15.9
Moderate	78	27.9
Rare	124	37.9
Not at All	73	22.3
Exposure to Gender Violence (N=327)		
Yes	213	65.2
No	114	34.8
Age of exposure to Gender Violence (N=213)		
5-14 years	34	15.9
15-29 years	145	68.1
30-44years	23	10.8
45 years and above	11	5.2

Education exposes individuals to many ignored aspects of life. Figure 1 indicates that a large majority (78.4%) of graduate respondents were reportedly aware of gender violence, followed by 68.4% with higher degrees. However, the level of awareness of gender violence was low among respondents (16.7%) who had only primary education. The scenario shows that respondents with primary education may not conceptualise gender violence as respondents who had post-primary education.

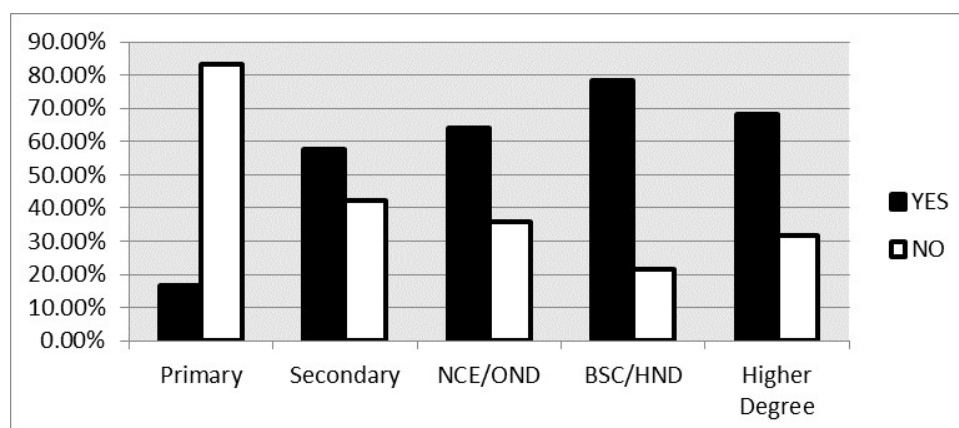


Figure 1. Educational attainment and level of respondents' awareness of GBV

4.2 Effects on and responses of Respondents to Gender Violence

Of the physically violated respondents (36.4%) who sustained an injury, Figure 2 indicates that 42% reportedly suffered emotional depression, 23.5% felt unsecured, 11.7% lost at least a part of their body and about 19.3% went through a medical operation. Thus, about one-third of the respondents cannot forget their experiences since the incidence involved hospital attention and medical fee.

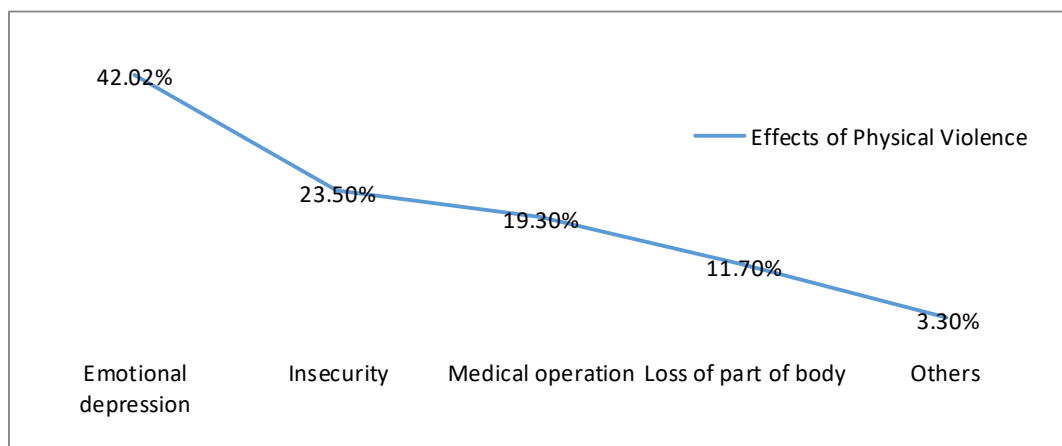


Figure 2: Effects of Physical Violence

About half (50.5%) of the respondents reacted to the non-physical violence against them. Of those that reportedly reacted, a large percentage (68.5%) left the violence against them to God, only 7.3% of the respondents took legal action by reporting to police officers. Less than a tenth (9.7%) fought the perpetrators of such acts. Consequently, this scenario allows 83% of the perpetrators to continue such an act since most of the victims accepted it as part of everyday life activity. However, there is a significant relationship between education and non-physical violence ($P < 0.05$).

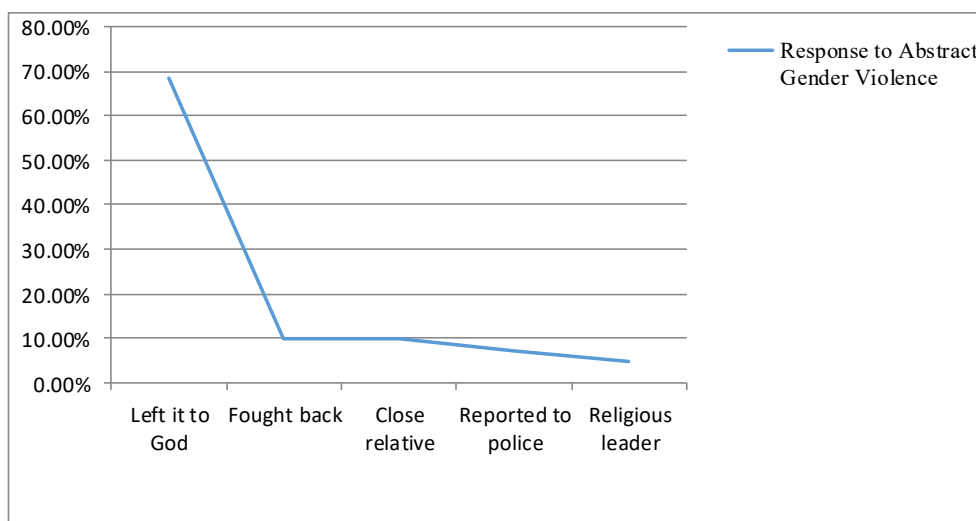


Figure 3: Response to Non-physical Gender Violence

Buttressing their reactions to gender violence, some women found it difficult to report such issues to the police since they see themselves as powerless and believed that law enforcement agencies were not really empowered by the constitution to protect them. They maintained that women are helpless and powerless in the existing social structures and welfare agencies were not available to them during crises (QScience.com reports 2014).

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study has revealed that the perception of gender-based violence (GBV) varies among individuals. Various reasons have been identified as causes of GBV. Indecent dressing, misunderstanding and illiteracy have been documented as major causes of GBV. Previous studies have also documented some of the causes identified in this study (UNICEF, 2010 & Ndungu, 2004). However, culture and biological differences are also responsible (Uwameiye & Iserameiya 2013 and Bryce et al, 2015). Considering the frequency of gender violence, close to half (43.8%) of the respondents reportedly agreed that gender violence was either moderate or very often. This corroborates the previous studies as WHO (2002). In addition, a release by Jekayinka (2010) maintains that domestic violence was at an alarming rate; some other studies attest to similar outcomes. This study indicates that 65.2% of the respondents were reportedly exposed to gender violence. This is higher than one-third as reported by WHO (2002) in Nigeria. However, respondents' age of exposure to gender violence is similar to another study (UNICEF, 2010).

This study indicates that majority (83.3%) of respondents with primary education were reportedly not aware of gender violence. Whereas Uwameiye and Iserameiya (2013) argue that gender-based violence will limit girls' access to education. Thus, education as a variable has reinforcing effects on gender-based violence. The study found out that a little above one-third (36.4%) of the physical abuse respondents reportedly had an injury. This finding is greater than 3% indicated in Idoko et al, (2015). Specifically, the outcomes include emotional depression, insecurity, medical operation, loss of at least a part of body etc. Previous studies have indicated similar effects of physical violence (Saferworld, 2015; Bryce et al, 2015; US State Department 2014; Uwameiye & Iserameiya 2013; El-Bassel, Gilbert, Wu, Go and Hill 2005 and Barnett, 2001).

In response to gender-based violence, the study indicates that only very few attempted to deter perpetrators. The study found that less than 10% fought the perpetrators. This is similar but less than the findings of Idoko, et al, (2015) in the Gambia, while 7.3% reported the perpetrators to the law enforcement agencies. Idoko and colleagues' study also indicated that 5% of their respondents reported to the police. Similarly, studies indicated underreported intimate partner violence (Maxwell et al, 2015 and Oluremi, 2015). The underreporting of gender violence depicts a double standard against women who were battered and told to keep quiet by their abusers (IRIN, 2007). The study by Idoko and colleagues (2015) also agree with the findings of this study. Specifically, this study shows that 68.5% of the respondents reportedly left the perpetrators to God which is similar but greater than 59% respondents in Idoko and colleagues' (2015) study in the Gambia.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Media campaigns against gender violence should encourage victims to report cases to appropriate authorities. This should be enhanced by serious policy attention over empowering women, spelling out a working gender policy explicitly coupled with local initiatives which are pivotal in achieving the gender equality for the country.

7. CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

Gender-based violence is covertly and overtly perpetuated. Elimination of the act remains a mirage since it has cultural undertones. However, the following recommendations are given:

Effective legal mechanisms should be devised to combat non-physical gender-based violence which will set a platform for gender equality.

People should substitute religious activism for religious reductionism since the majority of the respondents left redress to God which increases the likelihood of 83% of perpetrators of non-physical violence to commit such act again.

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