



The need to checkmate violence against women in a male-dominated society of Nigeria

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Abstract

In 2007 the Lagos state government of Nigeria passed the law against domestic violence. Similarly, in 2015 the federal government of Nigeria came up with a federal law called the violence against persons (prohibition) Act 2015. In response to 'The Due Diligence Framework of States Responsibility in the Elimination of Violence against Women, these two legislations were passed, and several states in Nigeria have done the same. The legislative frameworks established prevention, protection, prosecution, and punishment of perpetrators of violence against persons, especially women and children who are usually victims, and provided the mode of redress and psychological revival for victims. The state is responsible for upholding human rights protection, particularly in eliminating violence against women, and every citizen, without discrimination. Meanwhile, Nigeria has yet to attain zero violence, but there are barriers to the government's efforts to eliminate violence against women. But there are barriers to effectively protecting victims and punishing perpetrators. This article critically assesses forms of protection and punishment developed and enforced toward eliminating violence against women. It examines the policy, legislation, prosecution, and discipline and provides support and compensation for victims. Therefore, this article critically and systematically reviews documented legal, policy, and incidence of violence against women in Nigeria and suggests to minimise violence. This article adopts the non-doctrinal approach using textbooks, the internet, statutes and newspaper reports. The findings will provide essential data and analysis of state responses for developing further strategies and policies to stem the tide of violence against women in Nigeria.

Keywords: Violence against women, domestic violence, aggression in homes, frustration in marriages

Introduction

Violence against women has become so prevalent in Nigerian society, and it is so pathetic. No wonder the former Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), Ban Ki-Moon, described violence against women as a pandemic destroying life, holding development, and fracturing communities. Furthermore, it is widely recognised as an essential public health problem, owing to its consequences on physical, mental, and reproductive health. Most violence against women is usually perpetrated by their spouses or other intimate partners of women. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that private partners are responsible for 38% of female homicides and that 42% of women have been physically and sexually assaulted by a partner, resulting in injuries. Discoveries have shown that 7.2% of adult women have experienced sexual violence by a non-partner.

Violence against women affects women from different backgrounds and cross-cultural settings. The most vulnerable to domestic violence against women are the poverty-stricken women and the educationally disadvantaged, which, in most cases, depend on their male partners for survival; these women are uninformed, face barriers to access to justice, and are so susceptible to violence without redress. sex workers are more vulnerable to violence from men patronising their intimate services. These women experience Physical, sexual, and verbal violence in every aspect of their lives, occurring in almost all societies around the globe. Spice8 posits that physical violence had been the biggest challenge to sex workers, and most sex workers interviewed and examined by Harding in Nottingham had encountered some form of physical, emotional, or sexual violence in different forms.

The United Nations (UN) has defined gender-based violence as acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, in public or private life." Gender-based violence is a human rights violation that occurs internationally in developing and developed countries, regardless of culture, socio-economic class, or religion. It is a product of uncontrolled anger and emotion by the male gender, and sometimes there could be gender-to-gender violence, in which case a woman may attack a fellow woman or even kill another woman.

Despite the United Nations Declaration for eliminating violence against women, the implementation perspective has been weak unless the member state domesticates the international instrument. The extent of implementation is doubtful in a male-dominated society like Nigeria. The Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is a significant milestone in global efforts to eliminate gender-based violence. CEDAW is a globally considerable treaty that ensures the state's commitment to eradicating discrimination against women, including eliminating gender-based violence. The impact of CEDAW is not well felt as the male gender superiority syndrome is prevalent in the vast Nigerian environment. The tenets of CEDAW are in line with section 42 of the federal republic of Nigeria's constitution, which seeks to eliminate discrimination in Nigerian society irrespective of the circumstance of birth, sex, religion or place of origin or abode. The success of section 42 leaves much to be desired because gender-based violence is rampant in Nigeria, as we will point out instances of gender-based violence. Compliance with principles and provisions in CEDAW largely depends on the political will of the state parties; the political will is what the Nigerian government lacks in the implementation of the CEDAW tenets. Recommendation

No. 19 (1992) and No. 35 of the CEDAW Committee show state responsibilities in the following expression:

"General recommendation No. 19 on violence against women, adopted by the Committee at its eleventh session in 1992, stated that discrimination includes gender-based violence, which is a violation of human rights. The convention presses it upon member state to strive to eliminate discrimination against women or gender based discriminations. This obligation, frequently referred to as due diligence, underpins the Convention. Accordingly, States parties will be held responsible when they fail to pursue legal action against perpetrator of violence and make compensation for victims of violence in their jurisdictions in any gender-based violence against women."

The United Nations General Assembly in 1993 presented the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, and it provides as follows: The convention presses it upon member state to strive to eliminate discrimination against women or gender based discriminations. This obligation, frequently referred to as due diligence, underpins the Convention. Accordingly, States parties will be responsible when they fail in the duties investigate, prosecute and punish the offenders and also compensate the victims of violence.

Public international law has evolved over the years to urge state members to take proactive steps to prevent and protect human rights abuse victims. State members should enact domestic law in line with international instruments and conventions protecting human rights in their jurisdiction.

The Nigerian Perspective of Gender-Based Violence, Especially Women Victims.

Nigeria is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) but. Still, domestication of the same had not been easy because of Nigeria's male masculinity posture. Nigeria's parliament felt there was no need to pass such legislation since section 42 of the constitution has eliminated all forms of discrimination against any citizens based on race, tribe, and circumstance of birth, sex, religion and ethnic affiliation. However, there is a law against domestic violence which is an offshoot of CEDAW, although not explicitly directed at women but all genders in society.

It is disheartening that gender violence directed against females continues to permeate Nigerian society in different forms. Daughters are raped by their fathers; girls are beaten and, at times, used for rituals by their lovers. Women are maltreated at the workplace, and wives are often killed by their husbands in a gruesome murder as domestic violence. Females are repeatedly sexually harassed by their teachers in Nigerian institutions of higher learning. We shall see the details of these claims in this article. The Lagos State, Sexual offence response team, has condemned such violence against females.

The Lagos State Government launched the 'Sex Offenders' register in 2014 as an executive order. There is the mandated reporting policy 2014 as well. There is the Lagos State Protection Policy, which is an annexure to the order, and the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSVRT), established in 2013. It is an Agency of the Government, headed by Mrs. Titilola Vivour-

Adeniyi. When the Agency was established in 2013, complaints were just three per month, but as of January 2018, the protests have increased to an alarming rate of one hundred and thirty (130) per month.

For a better appreciation of the violence women face in the Nigerian environment, we shall categorise violence against women into several case studies viz:

1. Gender-Based violence perpetuated by security forces

Government security forces are also thorns on women's flesh in their high handedness and aggressive duty approach. In the reported case of *Alhaja Abibatu Mogaji & Ors v. Board of Customs and Excise & Anor*, the Plaintiffs were market women. They brought a civil action against the defendants, the Board of Customs and Excise and its Director in Nigeria, alleging that the Plaintiffs were beaten with horsewhip by the defendant's staff assisted by soldiers and mobile police officers. The plaintiffs further alleged that the customs officials and other law enforcement fired guns and teargas on the nine plaintiffs because the plaintiffs were purportedly in possession of certain contraband goods in their shops.

The court held that the Defendants' action violated the women's fundamental rights under section 31 (9) of the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, now section 34 of the 1999 Constitution. The court condemned the action of the Defendants in the following words.

I would make an order for a declaration that the action by the customs men aided by police officers and soldiers with the use of guns, the firing of same, the use of horsewhip and tear gas for the apprehension, seizure and detention of goods suspected to be prohibited as was meted to first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eight plaintiffs' witness and removal of their goods without due investigation violates the rights of the plaintiffs under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria not to be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment.

2. Sexual violence and abuse

Sexual violence or rape, or sexual abuse has become a common feature of Nigerian society, to the extent that the situation appears uncontrollable. The Lagos state government has established the sexual offence and domestic violence court specifically to handle sexual abuse and violence against women. Despite this laudable initiative by the government of Lagos state in Nigeria, sexual abuse of minors and girl children persisted in our country. Females appear to be an endangered species that needs to be protected with every concerted effort of the government-backed by political will to conquer the menace. It was reported a man identified as Mr Ojomu took the habit of sexually abusing his wife's sister, who was a minor of 15 years of age, until his evil act was discovered and he was made to face the wrath of the law. The suspect took advantage of the minor under his care, refusing to pay the school fees of the senior secondary one (SS1) student until the girl yielded to his sexual demand, and he had sexual intercourse with the underage girl regularly. The 15-year-old girl kept quiet about the abuse against her, for fear of dropping out of school, in line with the threat of Mr Ojomu not to pay the fees of his wife's teenage sister. This sexual

exploitation lasted for two years until the girl told her teacher in the school. The teacher subsequently alerted the child protection group led by Mr Toyin Olantanwon in the locality, who took up the matter, reported the incident to the police at the Onipan Police Station and Mr Ojomu was promptly arrested him. The suspected Rapist was arrested by the Lagos state police Public Relations Officer Chike Oti, a Superintendent of Police (SP), the medical report was obtained, and the suspect was charged to court accordingly. In another incidence, It was reported that four men, namely: Adenekan Adedeji (40), a driver; Ojo Taiye (35), a driver; Johnson Mohasan (24) four Accused persons to wit: Adenekan Adedeji (40), a driver; Ojo Taiye (35), a driver; Johnson Mohasan (24), a security guard; and Peter Arabo (33), a tiler; prompted the police to arrest and charge them to court of competent jurisdiction, the Domestic violence and Sexual Offences court under section 137 of the criminal law. The victims were nursery school pupils. One imagines what could lead a man of 40 to rape a baby of 3 years and five years.

3. Domestic Violence

The Black Law Dictionary also defines 'Domestic Violence' thus:

"Violence between members of a household, usually spouses; an assault or other violent acts committed by one household member against another. The infliction of physical injury, or the creation of a reasonable fear that bodily injury or harm will be inflicted, by a parent or former member of a child's household, against a child or another household member. Also termed Domestic abuse or family violence."

The reputed dictionary describes domestic violence as inflicting physical injury on another person. In Nigeria, women appear to be more victims of these physical injuries, though men still suffer the same.

The Lagos State Protection against Domestic Violence Law 2007 did not define domestic violence but listed acts that constitute domestic violence. These acts include:

1. Physical abuse and sexual exploitation, including rape and incest
2. Starvation, verbal and psychological abuse
3. Economic abuse and exploitation and denial of basic education
4. Intimidation and harassment
5. Stalking and cyber stalking
6. Pouring acid on someone or other poisonous substance.
7. Damage to property and unlawful entry into another person's residence
8. Any other abusive behaviour which could harm the safety, health or wellbeing of
9. someone, and
10. Deprivation

To bolster the meaning of domestic violence against women, some instances of violence leading to the death of women could suffice

Samuel Mgbeodinma killed his wife, Mrs Gloria Onyedikachi, in four months of marriage

Tragedy struck on the 16th day of June 2018. A couple who recently married on the 10th day of February 2018 fell apart

in domestic violence, which saw the husband, Mr Samuel Mgbeodinma, beat his wife, Mrs Gloria Onyedikachi Mgbeodinma, to death on Saturday the 16th day of June 2018 at their Ikotun residence in Alimosho Local Government area of Lagos state Nigeria. After killing the wife, the brutal man put her in his car. He drove off to his parent's home at Egbeda, the neighbouring community to Ikotun, in the Alimosho Local Government of Lagos state. It was reported that the deceased was six weeks pregnant at her demise. It was further alleged that it was not until noon Sunday, the 17th day of June 2018, that family members of the deceased woman went to the husband's father's home, took the corpse to the mortuary and called in the police.

Mr Olaoluwa Adejo, a bank worker, killed his 28-year-old wife, Maureen.

For the reason not yet disclosed, a bank worker, Mr Olaoluwa Adejo killed his 28-year-old wife, Maureen, at their home on Peluola Street, in the Bariga area of Lagos State. Mr Olaoluwa Adejo reportedly used a belt and machet to kill his wife. Surprisingly the murder was carried out in the presence of the couple's five-year-old son, Richard, who testified that his father also forced a local insecticide, 'otapiapia', down the throat of his mother; consequently, the police in Lagos arrested the 32-year-old banker who hails from Lagos state.

Isaiah Chukwu killed his wife Joy Osoemena Chukwu at Oshodi Lagos state.

The recently reported domestic violence case is that of Isaiah Chukwu, who killed his wife, Joy Osoemena Chukwu, at their residence in Balogun Street, Oshodi Lagos state, over alleged infidelity. The incident occurred on the 21st day of May 2018. The couple got married in 2016 and had no child yet. For the alleged accusation of adultery, Isaiah Chukwu murdered his wife. He stuffed her remains in a giant bucket. He was heading to dispose of the body at night, at which point the men of the vigilante group got suspicious of his movement. They demanded to see what he was carrying in the smelling bucket on his head, which turned out to be his wife's body; what a horror. A deceased family member, Mr Nnaji Offor, said that Isaiah Chukwu had just paid the wife's dowry in April 2018 before he decided to murder her. He was arrested, and the patrolling police team came around and took the murderer to the Akinpelu Police Station. Police spokesman, ChikeOti, a Superintendent of Police (ASP), confirmed the incident.

Torture and Inhuman Treatments

Torture and other inhuman treatment constitute domestic violence under extant law prohibiting violence against persons. Surprisingly too, women also perpetuate violence against females.

Mrs NkirukaNgwu, a petty trader, burnt maid with pressing iron and hot water

Mrs NkirukaNgwu, a petty trader mother of four, lost her temper and went berserk, at which point she used a hot pressing iron to burn a maid under her care on the alleged reason that the maid maltreated her children whenever she was away. As if that was not enough, she was alleged to have also poured hot water on the defenceless ten-year-old girl. To heighten her heartlessness, the suspect failed to take the maid to the hospital for treatment despite her plea to

female neighbours. This prompted the sympathetic women to petition the Lagos state Police commissioner. Mrs Nkiruka Ngwu was arrested while the battered girl was taken by the Gender Section of the police command to the police hospital for treatment. Police spokesman Chike Oti, a Superintendent of Police (ASP), confirmed the incident and the suspect's arrest.

Nigeria has attempted several laws and policies to eradicate violence against people but none was explicitly directed against Violence Against Women. However, the efficacy of State-made law is questionable in addressing cases involving underserved groups. In the United States, there has been long friction regarding the rights of the Native community, including Native women. United States law creates a discriminatory system for administering justice in Native communities, allowing criminals to act with impunity in Indian communities, threatening the lives and violating the human rights of Native women and girls daily, and perpetuating an escalating cycle of violence in Native communities. This highlights the United States' failure under its law, including the trust responsibility to Indian nations, for which United States Declaration of human rights stands^[1].

Under the United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous people, state members are to ensure the following concepts are observed as it affects the violence against women in any society. Member states are to ensure that violence against women is prevented from occurring. They should ensure that women are protected against any form of violence. Women must live a violent free life where ever they find themselves. The perpetrators of violence against women are arrested, prosecuted and brought to book. State members are to prosecute the case of violence against women and get the perpetrators punished at the end of the prosecution. And finally, those perpetrators of violence against women must be made to pay reparation to the victims or survivors.

Psychological and Economic Rehabilitation of Victim of Violence In Nigeria

Indeed, violence prohibition laws in Nigeria, but the extent of support services' adequacy in eliminating gender-based violence has been criticised on the accessibility of these services towards the underserved group, for instance, the illiterate and the less informed women in the rural areas, coupled with cultural restrictions restrain from accessing justice when the incidence of violence occur. There is the need to enlighten women, especially the rural ones, of their right to justice and to develop the boldness to report their husbands to the police and other law enforcement agencies any violence against them or other women.

There is a need to assure victims of violence that they will be given housing and financial support even though their husbands are being prosecuted and other members of their families are rising against them. Housing and economic independence are essential for victims, without which victims cannot speak out. The Ministry of Women's Affairs must provide empowerment, child support and protection programs assistance to improve the economic status of women who are victims of violence. To achieve this laudable empowerment for any victim of domestic violence, the Ministry of Women's Affairs needs adequate budgetary allocation to implement rehabilitation and economic empowerment of women.

Provision of counselling and support services for women victims

In Lagos state, for instance, there is the Mirabel support and reporting centre for counselling and support services, shelters, and medical services; these services are inadequate due to low funding and fewer support staff. The little the centre has been carrying out in Lagos is commendable. Other states in Nigeria are encouraged to follow suit so that the campaign against gender-based violence will drastically reduce, even if it may not stop completely. Government referral hospitals should be intensified to provide medical services for victims of violence against women.

Punishment of Perpetrators

Punishing perpetrators will fall in line with the extant law. Violence against anybody is against the criminal law, and the punishment is harsh and physical. Even though a perpetrator may be held accountable based on the law, the law prescribes =N=100 000.00 (one hundred thousand Naira) fine or not more than five years imprisonment of both. Similarly, any person who attempts to commit the offence of violence against another person commits a felony and is liable upon conviction to a fine not more than three years or =N=200 000.00 (two hundred thousand Naira) fine or both fine and imprisonment. The law stretched it further by providing that any person who incites, aids or counsels another person to carry out violence against another person commits a felony also and is liable upon conviction to a fine not more than three years or =N=200 000.00 (two hundred thousand Naira) fine or both fine and imprisonment.

The investigation, prosecution, and punishment of perpetrators are strongly interconnected. To analyse the penalty, it is relevant to understand the investigation and prosecution procedure and factors affecting the court trial processes. An implementation of a law depends on how law enforcers understand the substance. Law enforcers are influenced by Nigerian society's perspective, personal experience, and culture in perceiving women and eliminating discrimination. Sexual violence, such as rape, is also a severe offence under the act, and the law imposes life imprisonment on any convict of rape.

Recommendations to Check Domestic Violence in Nigeria

1. Parents and Guardians have a significant role in investigating the family background of the man or lady their daughter or son intends to marry. If the family has a notorious history of domestic violence, it is risky marrying from that family. Such a violent family should be avoided in marriage.
2. Parents should teach their children or wards the correct values, giving a good upbringing. This position will instill in them early enough the right attitude to marriage when they get married; by so doing, they will eschew violence in every shed of it.
3. Incidentally Secondary school students engage in love dates. It is suggested that relationship experts give both secondary school students and tertiary institution students counselling to let them know how to identify abusive relationships. For instance, when a friend or fiancé or fiancée becomes overly possessive, yells, harasses and indulges in stalking, such a relationship will be violent if it eventually leads to marriage. Those in such relationships should quit and not dwell in the

illusion that they can change their partners in a marriage. No one can change a grown-up man or woman after a wedding.

4. The moment a spouse manifests aggression, and the other cannot handle it alone, he or she should consult a Psychotherapist or marriage counselor early for a solution on how to handle the aggressive spouse so as to quell the tense situation. Often the victims of domestic violence know their partners are bold, but they remain in such tense relationships without taking steps to contain it before it escalates. Aggression can be verbal or physical. Once a partner identifies this trait in their spouse, and it persists despite seeking help from counsellors, the spouse being oppressed should opt for judicial separation or dissolution of such marriage in a competent court of jurisdiction before death occurs.
5. Churches and mosques should regularly preach against domestic violence, bearing in mind that since they admonish their followers to seek paradise, a spouse who dies in aggressive marriage will likely miss the most priced and cherished heaven. Religious institutions should be bold enough to advise warring couples to separate before it degenerates to the death of a partner. When the tension comes down, the parties can return to continue their union, at least alive.
6. There should be societal enlightenment to remove the stigma of separation. Neighbours and friends should wade in to initiate separation early enough before it degenerates into the death of a partner. Before Barrister Udemé Odibi stabbed her late husband, Mr Otike Odibi, to death, Mr Otike, as reported earlier in this article, alerted his friends and his mother of his wife's threat to kill him. Still, no serious action came from his so-called friends and parents to cause separation between the estranged couple. Had separation been initiated, Mr Otike Odibi's death would have been averted.
7. Religious bodies should emphasise love, morals and integrity and responsibility. People must eschew greed and avarice so that the thoughts leading to money rituals will disappear. These evil thoughts of quick wealth compel spouses to use their partners for rituals, usually involving unlawful homicide.
8. Domestic Violence includes inflicting injuries on children in a household. Parents, therefore, must control their temper towards their children so as not to harm or kill them. Parents must imbibe the spirit of disciplining their children with love.

Violence against is age long event in Nigeria. It has gone deep into society. All must be put together to stop these ugly acts against women. We have suggested that, if holistically adhered to, it will stem the tide of violence and make Nigeria the sane society it ought to be. The era of survival of the fittest is gone. People must learn to live in peace and harmony and obey the laws of the land. Violence against women must stop, and the time is now.

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