



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND WOMEN ECONOMIC STAGNATION IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATION BUILDING

ROBERT SABO, Ph.D

Department of Political Science,
Bingham University, Karu
Nasarawa State

Abstract

A nation that recognizes women in nation building, progresses. Women are the lifewire of human existence, therefore undermining the role of women or maltreating them is the most unfortunate thing that can happen to any society. It is rather sad that world leaders have politicized the problem of Domestic Violence Against women either by not doing much or acting slowly in international forums to wage war on Violence against women. This paper highlights the national economic implications of Domestic Violence against Women on the contributions made by women to national development in Nigeria and across societies. The key International instruments that protect the rights of woman must be enforced, and failure to do so by countries that are signatory and had ratified such covenant or protocols should attract serious international sanctions. Nigerian government has the moral obligation to bring together human and material resources to end domestic violence against women.

Keywords: Violence, Domestic, Economy, Abuse, Justice, Stagnation, Nigeria.

Introduction

Women over the years have been abused by men both in times of peace and war, while the attention of the international community has always been on the violation of women during hostilities and war. This informed the United Nations to classify such atrocities as war crimes and therefore has codified it in the United Nations Charter on Rape and Abuse of Women (Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 and the additional protocols thereto, of 1977).

The crime of rape has long been considered by customary international law and some prosecutions of World War II offenders have been carried out. Also, the Geneva Conventions prohibits rape and other forms of sexual violence. From 1993/1994, a huge success was achieved when sexual violence against women specifically was codified for the first time as a recognizable independent crime within the statutes of international criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and Rwanda. This basic instrument became the foundation upon which the crime of rape and sexual violence are punished.

This paper will examine the politics of domestic violence and women's economic stagnation in Nigeria, including the history of violence against women. It will also attempt to describe the agony of this shameful act and its socio-economic implications to nation building. The paper will also investigate the effects of violence against women at home and during armed

conflicts. The research recommends that all State actors pay adequate attention to domestic violence against women the same way they do when the crime is committed during armed conflicts.

Domestic violence against women has some adverse effects on victims and the society at large. Due to the danger that comes with domestic violence, the global community took a firm position to address the crime of rape, sexual abuse and other related offences, and adopted some resolutions in the United Nations General Assembly. These include "The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), "The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women ("CEDAW", 1979) and Optional Protocol (1999) as well as general recommendation No 19 of the CEDAW Committee on violence against women, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and its Optional Protocol (2000) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

Methodology

The study will rely mostly on secondary source of data. The method of gathering data is quantitative, where some group of women were interviewed on focus group basis. However, the current security situation in Nigeria made it difficult to access some of the respondents with commanding knowledge as victims to gather firsthand information. Therefore, the research will benefit desk reviewers of previous research journals, and content analysis of magazines and newspapers. Equally, unstructured interview was organized with experts and scholars who have substantial scholarly and practical experience on the topic/subject.

Conceptualizing Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior which involves violence or other forms of abuse by one person against another in a domestic setting, such as in cohabitation, marriage, or partner in an intimate relationship. By extension domestic violence can involve violence against children in the family. Domestic violence consists of a pattern of coercive behaviors used by a competent adult or adolescent to establish and maintain power and control over another adult. By definition, domestic violence seems to encapsulate a range of crimes in one single sentence. Domestic violence takes various forms, which includes physical, verbal, emotional, economical, religious, sexual abuse, ranging from marital rape, to violent physical abuse such as female genital mutilation and acid baths, often resulting in disfigurement or death, kicking, holding, slapping and punching the victim. (Declaration on the elimination of violence against Women 1993, UN DAOR, A/RES/48/104). Domestic violence can be abuse perpetrated mainly by men against women in a relationship or after separation. It occurs when one partner attempts physically or psychologically to dominate and control the other. Domestic violence could lead to murder, stoning, bride burning, honor killing and dowry death (Lynn Barkey, March 30, 2016). Domestic violence may occur as a result of physical or social isolation, for instance, denying communication with friends or relatives, abandoning in dangerous places; being denied help when sick or injured; being denied access to money or basic necessities.

Domestic violence has a long history, which spans the histories and cultures of one society to the other. For example, the Common law of England permitted a man to beat his wife, provided the diameter of the stick used was not wider than the diameter of his thumb, hence the term for beating a wife is "Rule of thumb".

The Role of Women in Nation Building

"When women are full participants in the democratic process, there is greater likelihood that the society's policies will better reflect the need of all the citizens", says Caldwell, a member of the British parliament. Also, stressing the significant role played in nation building, Marjorie Mowlam, also a member of the British parliament, observes: "It is important for women to not just be in office, but in power. Women must be in power before we can say [of them] to be equal" (qtd. In Wilson 33).

Women are role models in peace building, restoring hope and often leading to robust economic and political stability in post conflict countries. Women's participation in the political life of a nation is an important ingredient in achieving an equitable, peaceful and more prosperous society. A society that shows concern for the rights of women, will be unlikely to initiate violence against them. In the same vein, economic and social developments are strongly elevated when women enter into the marketplace. (RAND National Security Research Division).

Gender equality and women inclusion play a central role both as a litmus test and as an active variable shaping a more stable democratic and developed society. In other words, incorporating women in the nation building process as early as possible will help make a nation more stable and developed (Cheryl Bernard 2013).

The more women are deprived of participation in political action, the more the nation deprives itself of progress. Therefore, it is imperative that the nation builders should work to reconcile traditional values with progressive ideas involving women's participation in the society.

According to the National Population Commission (NPC) and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS 2016), Nigeria has approximately 51% males and 49 females. However, after 20 years of transition to democracy, women are yet to occupy up to 15% of elective positions in a country where the voting population of both men and women is almost equal. Not only have women not been elected president, none has been elected vice president, or governor in 20 years of democracy.

Women have contributed a lot to nation building in Nigeria, holding various public offices. Some women have attained the position of deputy governors, in some states of the Federation. However, in spite of misconceptions arising from traditional and religious biases about the role and place of women in nation building, records show notable achievements of Nigerian women in socio-economic and political sectors dating back to the colonial times, when, in 1929, Aba Women revolted against the British Colonialists for their misrule. This revolt by women later brought the evolution of autonomy in local government administration in Nigeria. Chief Fumilayo Ransome-Kuti, founder of the Abeokuta Women's Union and mother of the late music icon, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, is regarded as one of Nigeria's feminist pioneers, as well as a leading figure in the anti-colonial movement. Others are, Amina J. Mohammed, the current Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations; Ngozie Okonjo-Iweala, the former Finance Minister who became Managing Director of the World Bank from 2007 to 2011; Oby Ezekwesili, former Education Minister and coordinator of 'Bring Back our Girls' campaign; late professor Dora Akunyili, the former Minister of Information and Communication; Hajiya Gambo Sawaba (Nigerian's Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2019) among others.

The Economic Cost of Domestic Violence in Nigeria

Domestic violence is costly in terms of human and material resources to any given society and to its victims as well. The annual economic cost of maintaining the victims of economic violence in the United States of America in 2003, was estimated at 8.3 billion US dollars, including 6.2 billion for physical assault, 461 million dollars for stalking, 460 million for rape, and 1.2 billion for lives lost. The center for disease control and prevention (CDC) reports show that, victims of serious domestic violence annually miss 8million days of paid work -- the equivalent of 32,000 full-time jobs, and approximately 5.6 million days of household productivity. If advanced and technologically based societies do incur huge costs in billions of dollars as a result of domestic violence, then Third World countries like Nigeria, where domestic violence is a regular phenomenon, the cost will be unprecedented. And there is still a long way to go to see the end of this deadly epidemic called "Domestic Violence".

The stories of domestic violence amongst women in Nigeria is heartbreaking, just as it is in other African countries and other parts of the world. Women and children are usually the most venerable in the society, especially in crisis-prone zones and countries that have just come out of wars, political and civil unrest, or experiencing economic struggle and with high level of illiteracy in some key segments of their society. The underlying facts about domestic violence informed the report of Auke Hoeffler of Oxford University and James Fearon of Standard University, who wrote for the Copenhagen Consensus Centre, as follows: Domestic violence costs the world economy more than 8 trillion US dollars a year; women and children killed are more than the numbers that die in wars annually. Economic losses are put at an equivalent of 11.2% of world Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Civil wars cost the world economy about 170 billion US dollars a year. Reports have also shown that about 290 million children suffer violence at home (UNICEF, 2016).

Bjorn Lomborg, head of Copenhagen Consensus Centre, has said that the "household was often overlooked, just as car crashes attracted less attention than plane crashes even though many more died in road accidents. The same situation plays out, as household domestic violence is often neglected while undue attention is given to violence against women in volatile areas and labelled as "war crime" (Copenhagen Consensus Centre 2016).

United Nations reports suggest that more die violently at home than on battlefields leading to trillions of dollars' loss of economic activities. Therefore, the huge amount of money lost annually as a result of domestic violence, has ripple effects on the wider global economy, thereby creating the scarcity experienced across the globe and the continuous drop in employment.

The situation here is that, Third World women are mostly disadvantaged in attaining higher education, especially in sub-Sahara African countries, like Nigeria due to religious beliefs and illiteracy. The parents of these young women often prefer their daughters to be given out in marriage at a very early age, and as a result, a majority of them end up staying at home and waiting for their husbands to provide virtually everything they need. Gradually, the woman becomes an economic burden to the man. The man would try to take care of his wife according to his economic capacity, but as soon as his income drops, frustration begins to set in from both sides. The woman who is used to free lunch gets disappointed, and sooner or later violence would set in. Majority of these women are less empowered and cannot economically support themselves. Hence they become enslaved by their men and continually subjected to violence at home. The large workforce that is subjected to domestic violence by a culture that does not frown at such acts is better imagined. If these women are educated and empowered, they will contribute to national development and improve their lives. But

when women are not allowed to work, as the case is in some parts of northern Nigeria, they come under power and control of domestic violence.

The domestic violence and control makes people and a society economically backward. Moreover, this imbalance of power robs the other partner of rights and dignity. This further explains the high cost of domestic violence to the Nigerian State. For instance, due to the enforced gender roles and unequal opportunities to education, access to education is limited for women. Yet, education is an essential ingredient for development and tackling poverty. Gender bias and access to educational opportunities is reflected in the literacy rates figure in Nigeria. As at 1999 (USAID, 2018), the primary school attendance rate for male children was fifty-seven percent as against forty-three percent for the female (USAID, 2017).

Studies have shown that, women with higher income often have the resources to deal with domestic violence privately without involving the criminal justice system. Furthermore, the law enforcement agencies, (police etc) are more likely to arrest people in poor neighborhoods and middle income compare to upper-class neighborhoods. Those with fewer resources also face more stress, thereby increasing the risk of domestic violence (Holzworth-Munroe).

Domestic violence is a violation of Human Fundamental Rights, a crime the Nigerian Constitution prohibits, (the violence against person, Prohibition Act 2015). Yet, there are some provisions that make domestic violence against women legal. First of all, there is a provision of the penal code, in the northern part of Nigeria, which encourages violence against women. The provision permits the beating of a wife for the purpose of correction, (section 55 (1) (d) of the penal code). These penal code provision has watered down everything that is being done to ensure the protection of women in Nigeria. Paradoxically, Nigeria is Signatory to the United Nations Charter and Protocol on Human Rights protection. However, it is quite difficult for the authorities in Nigeria to enforce and adequately punish offenders and compensate victims of domestic violence. For instance, there are high profile cases of domestic violence committed with impunity against women, one of which was the case in 2010, of the traditional King of Akure, a mega city in South West of Nigeria, physically assaulted one of his wives resulting in her death. Initially, the shock of a traditional king beating his wife was terrifying and disheartening. At the urging of the public, the police made a statement that they would press charges. To the public's total dismay, the case was dismissed in 2012.

Data Analysis of Common Forms of Violence in Nigeria

Studies have shown prevalent data on different forms of violence against women in Nigeria as follows: Lifetime Physical and/or Sexual Intimate Partner Violence 16%; Physical and/or Sexual Intimate Partner Violence 11%; Lifetime non-Partner Sexual Violence 2%; Child marriage 44%; Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting 18%.

Studies also show that, women with higher income often have the resources to deal with domestic violence privately without involving the criminal justice system. Moreover, the law enforcement agency, (the police) are more likely to arrest people in poor neighborhoods and middle income bracket compared to upper-class neighborhoods. Those with fewer resources also face more stress, thereby increasing the risk of domestic violence (Holzworth-Munroe).

According to a National Demographic Survey 2008, 28% of all Nigerian women experienced physical violence, and up to 43% of the women out of a general national population of about 160million people had been physically abused because of burnt food, arguing with the

husband, going out without asking for permission, neglecting the children, or refusal to have sexual intercourse.

The report went further to say, women in North East Nigeria were likely to say beating was justified, while their counterparts in the South West Nigeria were least likely to say beating was justified. Women with no education are likely to say beating is justified, as well as rural women. Men with secondary education may be less likely to justify the beating of women, than men with less education. Furthermore, studies conducted in different regions in Nigeria have reported the prevalence of intimate person violence ranging from 42% in the North, 29% in the South West, 78.8% South East, 41% in the South South (Dienye P, Gbeneol P, Itimi K.2014).

The Nigerian Constitution and The Gap

In Nigeria, domestic violence is a violation of Fundamental Human Right, which the Nigerian Constitution prohibits, (the violence against person, Prohibition Act2015). Yet, there are some provisions that make domestic violence against women legal in Nigeria. First of all, there is a provision of the Penal Code in the northern part of Nigeria, which encourages violence against women. The provision permits beating of a wife for the purpose of correction (section 55(1) (d) of the Penal Code). The Penal Code provision has watered down everything that has been done to ensure the protection of women in Nigeria. Paradoxically, Nigeria is also signatory of United Nations Charter and Protocol on Human Rights Protection. However, it is quite difficult for the authorities in Nigeria to enforce and adequately punish offenders and compensate victims of domestic violence. In contemporary Nigeria, there are high profile cases of domestic violence against women, one of which is the case in 2010, of the traditional King of Akure, who physically and bloodily assaulted one of his wives resulting in her death. Initially, the shock of a traditional king beating one of wives was terrifying and disheartening, but with the authorities feeling reluctant to take action. It was at the urging of the public that the police made a statement that they would press charges against the suspect. To the public's total dismay, the case was dismissed in 2012, due to lack of political will and constitutional gaps. Women in Nigeria have become more vulnerable as a result of this.

Government Intervention and Challenges

Nigeria is a signatory to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the Protocol of the African Charter on the Rights of the Child (ibid, 22-23). However, research shows that Nigerian governments have not fully implemented these instruments at the domestic level. The Nigerian criminal code and penal code do not recognize marital rape (Centre for Reproductive Rights 2003, 85). This is contrary to the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006, which states that marital rape is recognized under the law in Nigeria, but that it is hard to prove it in court. Subsequently, under the sharia law or Muslim personal law, a woman can seek a divorce if her husband assaults her. However, the assault would need to be proven, which usually requires a string of witnesses (BAOBAB n. d. a). Source also report that some states in Nigeria have State-level domestic violence legislation, including: Ebonyi (US 27 feb.2014,35; Nwogugu 2014,113; Jigawa (US 27 Feb. 2014; 35; Project Alert 16 Oct 2014). Lagos enacted in 2007, while Cross River, Ekiti and Taraba States have a "gender -based" violence law (ibid, 119).

Furthermore, if a court grants a woman a divorce, she is not required to repay the dowry or make other payments to the husband (Ibid). This contrasting position of courts and ambiguity in the law regarding domestic violence against Nigerian women further widen

the social and economic gap of victims of domestic violence. This paper considers the major challenges faced by the Nigerian government in an effort to eliminate violence against women, to be the cultural and religious mindset of communities and the absence of political will.

Due to religious and cultural diversity, it may be difficult for the political elites to amend some gray areas of the Nigerian Constitution. However, it is imperative for government to have the political will to adopt universal best practices by giving women the opportunity to contribute meaningfully and fully to Nation building.

Result

At least one in four Nigerian women is reported having experienced partner's violence. Currently in Nigerian National Assembly, Women occupy 7 out of 109 Senate seats and only 22 out of 360 seats in the House of Representatives. There is no female State governor for now. Globally, it has been widely accepted and recognized that inclusivity in political participation is a fundamental aspect of modern democracy. Consequently, improved representation of women has been shown to have benefits such as stable and progressive democracy. Women are grossly underrepresented in politics, decision making and in different levels of government, which would lead to improved policy changes, economic growth, enhancement of peace building and a more egalitarian society.

Conclusion

Domestic violence still continues in Nigeria. Most Nigerian women have actually lived with the brunt of domestic abuse by their spouses, or partners. For various reasons, tradition and religion seem to pave the way for domestic violence. Unfortunately, over a half of Nigerian woman have experienced domestic violence in one way or the other. Majority of women in the northern part of Nigeria are victims of early marriage, as well as less educated, which makes it difficult for them gain meaningful employment. As a result, they completely depend on their men for their needs and upkeep. This over-dependence on the man can very easily encourage domestic abuse against such women. There is therefore the urgent need to protect them from domestic abuse, and to enforce the necessary laws that will expressly bring justice to the victims. Moreover, victims of domestic abuse are either physically or psychologically sick, which affects productivity. Thus, when a large segment of the society is not productive, the national Gross Domestic Product drops.

Fair enough, in an attempt by the government to deal with problems of domestic violence and sexual assault against women, the Violence Against Persons (prohibition) Act (VAPP) was passed into law in May 2015. The enactment of the law was a welcome development by well meaning Nigerians and Women Rights Organizations. This Act was passed due to serious agitations for protection of persons against the backdrop of different forms of violence. The passage of the Act is a step forward for the Nigerian penal and criminal code in connection with control of violence against women. But it is imperative for the government to do more through the instrument of law enforcement to bring violators to justice. Consequently, all States of the Federation should immediately adopt and enact laws on the protection of persons and domestic violence against women and stop playing politics with the destiny of our women, who, in fact, hold the destiny of our country.

Works Cited

- AfroNews (2007) Half of Nigerian women experience domestic violence: retrieved May 22, From <http://www.afro.com/awrticles/16471>.
- Agbo C. Agbo, Choli R. (2014) Domestic violence against women: Any end in sight? From leadership/ news/382501.
- Blogs: the insider- 26th Oct, 2016.
- Colorado Domestic offender management Board (2010) standard for treatment with court ordered domestic violence offenders. Retrieved from http://dj.state.co.us/advson/domestic_violence/Dv_pdfs.
- Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED, 2007) IDA Directory [http://www.cfed.or/tocus.m? Parented =31 and siteid=374 and id=599](http://www.cfed.or/tocus.m?Parented=31&siteid=374&id=599).
- Data from the Nigerian Demographic and Health Survey, <http://www.measured.his.com/pubs/pdf/Gf15/Gf15.pdf>.
- Dodd, L.W. (2009) Therapeutic group with youth children and mothers who have experience domestic violence abuse. *Education psychology in practice*. 25(21).
- Domestic violence .com. ng/research. Statistics/ Domestic Violence: The criminal justice system response, Beverly Hills, Calif Sage, 1996.
- Famer A. and Tiefertalter J. (1997) An Economic Analysis of Domestic Violence. *Review of Social Economy*, 555, 337-358.
- Goetz. A.T. (2010) The Evolutionary Psychology of Violence. *Psicothema*.22 (1), 15-21.
- National Population Commission (NPC) (Nigeria) and Icf macro 2009, Nigerian Demographic Survey, 2008, Abuja, Nigeria. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNDQ923.pdf.
- Office of Violence Against Women (2007). About domestic violence. Retrieved June 13, 2007 from <http://www.isdoj.gov/ovw/domviolence.htm>.
- Steele B. F. (Wikipedia (2012), Domestic violence, retrieve on April. 19, 2012 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domestic_violence.1974), a psychiatric study of parents who abuse infant and children.
- Stress disorder in abused in Obi, S.N. and B.C. Ozumba (2007) Factors associated with domestic violence in South -East Nigeria. *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*. 27. (1) 75-78.
- Stop Violence Against Women (2010). Retrieved on April. 24, 2010, from http://www.stopvaw.org/Domestic_Violence_and_Housing.html.
- The paradox of hope: the crime of punishment of Domestic Violence. *William and Mary, law review* 39 (1998): 1505-1584.
- Redevelopment opportunity for women, Inc. (2006) realizing your economic action plan (REAP) published Curriculum. Redevelopment opportunity for women Inc. St Louis: Mo.
- UNICEF, report for United Nations suggests more die violently at home than on the battle field leading trillion of lost economic activity. 9/9/2014 (Humanitarian crises).
- UNICEF (2005) Violence at home (achieve) Voices of youth forum, Retrieved Oct. 2008 from <http://www.unicef.org/roy/discussion/archived/index>.
- Weaver, T. L, Sanders, C. K. Schnabel, M. and Campbell, C. L. (under review), Development and Preliminary Psychometric Evaluation of a Measure of Domestic Violence Related to Financial Issues. (DV-f1).