

Determinants of Violence Against Women and Girls Within the Communities in Nigeria

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Abstract

In many countries of the world particularly in Nigeria a substantial proportion of women and girls experience physical, sexual and psychological abuse, marital rape and even abduction by militants. This study investigates the level or the magnitude of sexual and physical violence among and within the communities in Nigeria. It also investigates the contribution of sex of individuals, age and religion as prevalent factors of physical and sexual violence among Nigerians. The study also investigated whether there would be a single best predictor of physical violence among the predicting factors. The population for the study consists of all dating, cohabitating and married people in intimate relationship in Nigeria. The population also consist of the children of the married people. Stratified, purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to select a sample of 500 Nigerians women and girls from different religion, age, educational background, and with various age of marriage and marital status. A self-constructed instrument was used to collect data. The instrument is valid and has a reliability coefficient of 0.85. Descriptive and inferential statistics such as means, standard deviation, t-test, Analysis of variance and other appropriate ones were used to analyze the data used in testing the hypotheses and in answering the general question. The study revealed the magnitude of violence experienced by women and points to the factors and variables which could be responsible for gender violence against women and girls in Nigeria.

Keywords: Sexual abuse, violence, abduction.

Theme session: Violence against women and girls

Introduction

Family violence against women and girls has multiple dimensions of definitions. The multiple dimensions of this violence make it a task not only difficult but also controversial. However attempt to define violence of women and girls include, a trend towards a set of behaviors' that are seen as abuse or neglect, the role of cultural norms, the role of intentionality, the balance of power in the perpetrator-victim relationship and influence of services-sector resources on definition Strong, Devault, Barbara and Yarber (2003). Violence against women and girls are acts which overly or covertly, threaten the fundamental human rights of the women and girls, thus impairing the attainment of self-actualization. These are also act which is capable of depleting the self-concept, self-worth and the purpose of existence of individual family members (Kelly 2004).

In an attempt to classify violence against women and girls Strong *et al* (2003) listed the different types of violence experienced by Nigerian women as physical, sexual, emotional, verbal and economic abuse. The USA Department of Justice (2000) reports that physical violence could include inflicting of physical injury on children or pet in order to cause psychological harm to the victim. Physical abuse could also include slapping choking pushing, burning or punching of the victim.

Akanle (2011) indicated that sexual violence includes the coercion of a person to engage in sex against the consent of the individual who may be a spouse, sexual partner or a daughter. Violence also include rape, such act like unwanted, kissing, touching, gesture or look. Emotional violence could be name calling, making statements that are damaging to the self-esteem of individuals, humiliating the victim privately, or publicly, holding information from the victim, embarrassing, isolating the victim from the family or friend or blackmailing someone in order to creating emotional depredation. Also, denial of the victim from access to money, independence or happiness could also constitute emotional violence. Verbal abuse has similar characteristics with emotional abuse, while economic abuse involves: limiting the amount of resources to be used by the victim. compelling the victim to solely

depend on the person financially, denying the victim career advancement, educational opportunity, monitoring how the victim spend her money without his consent (Otive Igbuzon Ejiro 2007).

Another special type of violence is the abduction of 276 female students by the Islamic militants on the night of 14-15th April 2014 from the Government Secondary School in Chibok town of Borno State in Nigeria. Later the Dapchi girls were also kidnapped Responsibility for the kidnapping was claimed by the “Boko Haram” an Islamic Jihadist and terrorist organization based in the North Eastern part of Nigeria. Even by Tuesday December 2014 after 237 days in captivity, the girls were yet to be rescued. According to Dr. Ewzekwesili a former Minister of Education in Nigeria. Nigeria is a society that thrives in inequality and violence (Daily Sun Tuesday December 16, 2014 was www.sunnewsonline.com).

Furthermore, Ewzekwesili opined that if the “chibok girls” are the daughters of the Ministers, Governors or highly placed Nigerians, the situation of the abducted girls would be different, the government would handle it more carefully and with more seriousness.

In Nigeria today especially in the North Eastern parts, keeping one’s children in school is no longer safe. Violence against women and girls is wide spread and it is a serious problem. Violence against women and girls takes many forms, both in the public and private spheres, and constitute a continuum across women’s lifespan.

The United Nation Secretary General has repeatedly emphasized that as long as violence against women continue, the world cannot claim to be making real progress toward equality, development and peace. According to the Secretary-General, violence against women is widespread and it is a gross violation of human right presently in all countries. Violence cut across all socio-economic levels of the society. Violence against women is deeply rooted in structural relationship of inequality between men and women. Gender based violence exist in many forms such as domestic violence, marital rape, harmful traditional practices and honour killings as well as human trafficking of women and girls.

A study conducted by Akanle (2012) reported that 98% of widows experience discriminatory attitude from men and the family members of their late husband. Owuanaman (1995) reported a high prevalence of sexual coercion in public institutions in Nigeria. Akanle (20011) indicated a wide pattern of sexual and physical coercion with a variation in magnitude and types. According to these researchers sexual harassment is common form of sexual exploitation which occurs in virtually every place among children and adolescent in school and outside the school system. Traditional norms were reported to condone sexual coercion of the female in Nigeria.

Teachers and adults, children were reported to be involved in about 40% of the sexual coercion experienced by students in Nigerian schools. This is because the relationship between students and teachers reflect power differential or struggle between them. The frequency and percentage of women who have experienced sexual violence according to Akanle (2011) shows that 40.2% women in intimate relationship have be assaulted by their partners or battered by them while 45.5% have been denied of the right to use contraceptive in an earlier study. Others were not allowed to make decision or prevented from discussing sexual issues or forced to abort a pregnancy. Sexual violence against women is complicated by multiple factors these are factors increasing the risk of an individual men forcing sex on another person, or increasing the risk of someone being coerced into sex. These factors increase the risk of an individual men forcing sex on another person or increases women’s vulnerability. One of the most common factors for women in terms of their vulnerability to sexual assault is being married or cohabiting with a partner.

Customary and religious laws and practices are often used as tools to control women’s sexuality and to maintain the imbalance of power in sexual relations. The impact of such laws and practices on women sexuality is clearly visible, where a high rate of female illiteracy and specific forms of cultural violence produce a wild range of violations of women’s human right.

The context of religion is often misused as a powerful instrument of control, with the goal of legitimizing violation of women’s human rights (Pinar Ilikkaracan, 2002) As the educational level of women and their husband increases, the extent of domestic violence decreases, However, one third of the women who have a secondary or Higher education are subjected to emotional and physical violence by their husbands and one fourth have experienced marital rape.

One’s sex is a crucial factor in determining the kind of protection or the experience of emotional, sexual or physical violence.

In Muslim cultures particularly in terms of sexual drives, male and female are seen as opposite: men as rational and capable of self-control: women as emotion and lacking self-control. The social construction of gender differences requires that male control women's bodies and sexualities. Hence factors such as arranged marriage, forced marriages, polygyny and honour killing are used as collective control mechanism on women's sexuality.

Young women are usually found to be more at risk of rape than on older women (Aciero Retail 1999, Brown (2001), Heise (1994) other factors influencing the risk of sexual violence include, being young, becoming more educated and economically empowered, at least where sexual violence perpetrated by an intimate partner is concerned.

Acierno *et al* (1999) observed that young women are usually found to be more at risk of rape than older women. Women are at risk of sexual and physical violence by an intimate partner, when they become more educated and thus more empowered. Women with low level of education were found in a national survey in South Africa to be much less likely to experience sexual violence than those with higher level of education. Poverty makes women and girls to be more at risk of rape. Children of poor women may have less parental supervision, when not in school, since their mothers may be at work and unable to afford child care. The children themselves may be at work and thus vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Poverty forces men women and girls into occupation that carry a relatively high risk of sexual violence.

Statement of the Problem

Girls and women at all stages of their life experience violence in Nigeria. The preponderance of violence against women and children was reported in the Nation, Wednesday December 12, 2018 by Bisi Olaniyi who indicated that a man named Achibong aged 35 years, killed his four children aged one, three, five and eight after chasing away his wife from a two-room apartment. Achibong also set his home on fire and later hanged himself. In another report by Precious Igbonwekindu in the Nation, December 12, 2018, it was reported that Johnson Okon a 58 years old father raped his 14 year old daughter. Rather than take action, the mother of the 14-year-old girl made life unbearable for the daughter for recounting how her father was sexually abusing her. Instead of taking action, the mother warned the daughter not to report or tells anyone.

A 15 years old pupil in an upper Area court¹, Kasuwan Nana, Jos was sentenced to two years jail for attempting to rape a seven year old girl. Sexual, physical and psychological violence is a prevailing problem in Nigeria. The level of sexual violence against women and girls has now become a matter of concern, not only to Guidance Counselors, the police and also to researchers who are concerned about the sexual health and human rights of women and girls Although rape is a criminal offence Victims are prevented or persuaded not to report cases of sexual violence. This is because of the belief that publicity resulting from prosecution of cases in court may have an adverse effect on the victim by making it difficult for her to find a husband. Also, that the publicity of the crime may have a bad effect on the perpetrators

Violence against women and girls appears to occur on a large scale in Nigeria. In Nigeria, some forms of sexual physical and psychological violence of, girls and women are regarded as normal part of social relationship commonly observed between a husband a wife and even between the father and the children. Husband are regarded as the head of the house hold, whose decision on issues of sexuality, must be obeyed and enforced. Nigeria men seems to uphold the culture of dominance. Women and children are seen as part of the inheritance of the men. Men believe that the payment of the bride price entitles them to dictate whom to have sex with and under which condition sexual act could occur. There is a need to prevent sexual violence of women and girls, and these may necessitate a cultural shift in terms of gender role. Hence there is a need for this research which deals with violence of women and girls within the communities in Nigeria.

To guide this study, this general question was raised; what is the level or magnitude of sexual and physical violence within the communities in Nigeria.

Hypotheses

1. Age is not a factor of psychological, sexual and physical Violence
2. Religion is not a factor of physical and sexual Violence

3. Men and women would not differ in their experience of sexual physical or psychologically Violence

4. There will not be a single best predictor of sexual physical and psychological violence among predictor variable such as sex, age marriage, religion, economic level, educational level of individuals.

Methodology

Descriptive research design was used for the study. The study population consists of all dating, cohabiting and married people in intimate relationship and their children in Nigeria. Stratified, purposive and simple random and sampling techniques were used to select a sample of 500 Nigerians from different ages, religions education background, marital status and with various age of marriage. A self-constructed instrument was used to collect data. The instrument consists of two sections, A and B. Section A measures the bio-data of respondents such as age, age of marriage, educational level, income per month, religion and marital status. Section B dealt with the experience of violence by respondent, it consists of 20 questions which sought information concerned with different forms of violence such as domestic violence, physical, psychological or physical, sexual violence and other types of dehumanizing experiences which respondents could be exposed to. The instrument is valid and has reliability co-efficient of 0.85. Two research assistants administered the questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential statistics such as means, standard deviation and percentage were used to describe the data. T-test, Analysis of variance and other appropriate inferential statistics were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Result

Question 1

What is the experience of sexual and physical violence by the Nigerian people?.

Table 1: showing the level of magnitude of sexual and physical violence within the Nigerian community

S/N	ITEMS	YES		NO		MEAN
		f	%	f	%	
1	Suggestive remarks of sexual interactions from opposite sex	312	62.4	188	37.6	1.62
2	Encouraged or invited to have sex against your wish	208	41.6	292	58.4	1.42
3	Received unlimited sexual advances from someone	250	50.0	250	50.0	1.50
4	Have experience forced sex before	125	25.0	375	75.0	1.25
5	Ever experienced rape	126	25.2	374	74.8	1.25
6	Received unwanted comments, gesture or talk suggesting invitation for sex	228	45.6	272	54.4	1.46
7	Has any shown you pictures dealing with sex to encourage you have sex	353	70.6	147	29.4	1.71
8	Unwanted kiss	312	62.4	188	37.6	1.62
9	Unwanted embraces	334	66.8	166	33.2	1.67
10	Unwanted folding	354	70.8	146	29.2	1.71
11	Verbal threat in relation for sex	125	25.0	375	75.0	1.25
12	Drugged or deceived into sex	104	20.8	396	79.2	1.21
13	Assaulted by your partner	104	20.8	396	79.2	1.21
14	Denied from discussing sex issue	84	16.8	416	83.2	1.17
15	Denied from the right to use contraceptive	126	25.2	374	74.8	1.25
16	Sexual assault within the conform of the home	83	16.6	417	83.4	1.17
17	Punished by partner for refusing sex	84	16.8	416	83.2	1.17
18	Forced to have unprotected sex	145	29.0	355	71.0	1.29
19	Not allowed to make decision about fertility	146	29.2	354	70.8	1.29
20	Forced to abort a pregnancy	41	8.2	459	91.8	1.08

Hypothesis 1

Age is not a factor of sexual, physical and psychological violence.

Table 2: ANOVA showing the experience of physical, psychological and sexual abuse by age

Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Groups	2611.055	3	870.352		
Within Groups	163084.417	496	328.799	2.647*	.048
Total	165695.472	499			

p<0.05

Table 2 shows that age is a factor of psychological, physical and sexual violence ($F_{3,496}=2.647$, $p<0.05$). The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that age is a factor of psychological, physical & sexual violence

Hypothesis 2

Religion would not significantly influence the experience of psychological, sexual or physical violence.

Table 3: t-test of respondents ‘Experience of psychological, sexual and physical violence.

Religion	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	p
Christianity	459	54.50	18.20			
Islamic	41	55.54	18.70	498	0.349	0.727

p>0.05

Table 7 reveals that religion would not significantly influence the experience of psychological, sexual or physical violence ($t=0.349$, $p>0.05$). The null hypothesis not rejected. This implies that religion would not significantly influence the experience of psychological, sexual or physical violence.

Hypothesis 3

Men and women would not differ in respect of their experience of sexual, physical or psychological violence.

Table 4: t-test showing male and female respondents ‘in their experience of sexual physical and psychological violence.

Religion	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Male	416	55.25	18.62			
Female	84	51.31	15.79	498	1.810	0.071

p>0.05

The result in Table 4 reveals that men and women would not differ in respect of sexual and physical violence ($t=1.810$, $p>0.05$). The null hypothesis not rejected. This implies that men and women would not differ in respect of their experience of sexual and physical violence.

Hypothesis 4

There would not be a single best predictor of sexual, physical or psychological violence among the predicting variable

Table 5: Multiple Regression analysis showing predictors of sexual violence.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	34.741	1.835		18.938	.000
Age	-.226	.171	-.053	-1.322	.187
Sex	-3.748	.484	-.335	-7.739	.000
Religion	1.314	.660	.086	1.991	.047
Marital status	-2.021	.673	-.134	-3.002	.003
Economical level	.804	.183	.170	4.399	.000
Level of Education	-1.325	.360	-.159	-3.680	.000

Multiple R = 0.556, Multiple R² = 0.309, Adjusted R² = 0.300, F_{6,493}=36.691

The following regression can be derived from Table 6.

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5 + b_6X_6$$

Where

- X₁ = Age
- X₂ = Sex
- X₃ = Religion
- X₄ = Marital status
- X₅ = Economical level
- X₆ = Level of Education
- b_i = (i=1-6) Regression Weight Coefficients
- a = Constant (other variables other than X₁-X₆)

The multiple relationships between the dependent and independent variables can therefore be given as follow:

$$Y = 34.724 - 0.226X_1 - 3.74X_2 + 1.314X_3 - 2.021X_4 + 0.804X_5 - 1.325X_6$$

Table 6 shows that there is significant contribution of demographic variables to sexual violence (F_{6,493}=36.691, p<0.05). The null hypothesis is rejected.

The table reveals that there is a significant positive multiple correlation between the predictor variables (age, sex, religion, marital, economical level and level of education) and experience of sexual violence (R=0.556, p<0.05). This implies that all the predictor variables are factors that can exert influence on the experience of sexual violence.

The value of the coefficient of determination (R²=0.309) indicates that all the predictor variables jointly accounted for 30.9% (R² X 100) of the total variance in the experience of sexual violence while the remaining 69.1% unexplained variation is largely due to other variables not included in the study that can account for the experience of sexual violence.

The regression result in the table reveals that the most important predictor variable that contributed to the experience of sexual violence is sex (β = 0.335). This was closely followed by economical level (β = 0.170), level of Education (β = 0.159), marital status (β = 0.134), religion (β = 0.086). The variable with the least contribution to the experience of sexual violence is age (β = 0.053). The calculated F-ratio (36.691) was significant at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the predictor variables jointly provide a significant explanation for the variation in the experience of sexual violence.

Discussion

The study investigated the determinants of violence against women and girls within the communities in Nigeria.

The study yielded considerable insight into the level and magnitude of sexual, physical and emotional violence against women and girls within the communities in Nigeria. Figure 1 shows a wide

pattern of sexual, physical and psychological abuse such as verbal threat in relation to sexual demands. Suggestive remarks of unwanted sexual interaction from the opposite sex, unlimited sexual advances, sexual assault within the confine of the home. Forcing women to abort pregnancies, denial of women right to make decision about fertility and punishment by the male partner for refusing sex. The findings of this research corroborate that of Owuamanam (1995) and Ajuwon *et al* (2001) who reported a high level or magnitude of violence against women and girls within the Nigerian communities.

The findings of this research are not surprising because the traditional norms in Nigeria condone violence against women and girls. Violence against women and girls in Nigeria is a form of discrimination that seriously inhabits women's rights to freedom on the basis of equality with men in Nigeria. Some forms of sexual, physical, psychological violence are regarded as normal part of social relationship commonly observed between a husband and wife even between the father and children, husband is regarded as the head of the house whose decision on the issues of sexuality must be obeyed and enforced. Nigeria men hold the culture of dominance and women are seen as inheritance of the men.

The study shows that all the predicting variables jointly provide a significant explanation for the variables in the experience of violence.

This finding agrees with that of Acierno *et al* (1999) who reported that the factors influencing the risk of sexual violence include age, being married, becoming more educated and more economically empowered.

Hypothesis one sought to find out if age is a factor of sexual and physical abuse. The result shows that age is a factor in sexual physical and psychological violence. These findings are supported by that of Brown (2001,) Heise (1994) and Aciero *et al* (1999.) Who observed that younger women are usually found to be more at risk of rape. The study also disagrees with that of Jewkes (2002) who observed that age may not be a factor in sexual, physical or psychological violence and that the dimension and level of severity of potential abusive situation depends on the sexual or physical behaviour.

Hypothesis two sought to find and if religion would be a factor of sexual physical or psychological abuse or that religion would significantly influence the violence within the community. Hypothesis 3 shows that the sex of individual or that men and women do not differ in their experience of sexual, physical or psychological violence. This finding agrees with that of Swiss *et al* (1998) who reported that sexual, physical or psychological abuse may be directed against men or women. Men or women may be raped. Hence there might be no difference in the experience of violence by men or women. The finding the study reveals that religion would not significantly influence the extent of violence within the Nigeria community. This finding goes against that of Pinar/Ilkaracan (2002) who observed that the context of religion is often misused as powerful instrument of control, with the goal of legitimizing violation of women's human right. The finding also goes contrary to the recent findings of WHO (2005) reported that religion laws and practices are often used as tools control women's sexuality and to maintain the imbalance of power in sexual relations. The impact of the laws are the visible forms of cultural violence that produce a wild range of violation of women's human rights Pinar Ikkaracan (2004) the recent findings might be so because of the little number of Muslim compared to Christians used in the study. Furthermore, it may also mean that in some cases, attitude towards certain things and the way people behave violently or not could be determined by other things or other factors apart from religion. It may also be that people have started to view violence not with the lens of religion. The findings of Hypothesis 4 research show that predicting factors such as, age, age of marriage, religion, marital status, level of education coordinate to the experience of violence. These findings support that at Akintoke (2006) which observed that sexual violence against women is completed by many factors and that these factors increases the rise of an individual forcing sex on another person or increases women's liability.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Considering the finding of this research it is concluded that age and Religion are factors of sexual violence and that no single best predictor of sexual violence exist, but that all the predictor variables jointly contribute to family violence. Hence all the predictor variables should be targeted in dealing with violence against women and girls within the communities in Nigeria.

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