

AN ASSESSMENT OF GENDER- BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN IN MAKURDI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE

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ABSTRACT

The problem of gender-based violence is a social and public health challenge affecting a large proportion of people in the society with significant effects. Men and women can both be victims and perpetrators however; particular attention have not been given to violence against men especially in countries of Africa including Nigeria leaving them at increased risk of violence. This study carried out an assessment of gender-based violence on men in Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria. Social cognitive theory and Frustration–Aggression theory were utilized. The study was a cross-sectional survey of married men. 424 Respondents were selected through multi-stage sampling technique. Questionnaire and was used to collect data. Quantitative data were analyzed at the univariate level using frequency distribution tables, while at the bivariate level Chi-square test and Pearson R were used for the analysis. Statistical Service Package for Solution (SSPS) version 26.0 aided the analysis. Content analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data. The study revealed that the respondents had experienced at least one form of gender-based violence. Effects of violence on men included increase alcohol intake/substance use, agitation and sadness, contemplating ending marriages/ running away, effects on blood pressure, trauma. Men experiencing abuse should cry out so they can be helped. Men should take advantage of existing verified counselling centers where the problem of gender-based violence are handled for counselling. Agencies that will serve as a form of support and shelter home for victims needing healing should also be established.

Keywords: Gender- Based Violence, Men, Benue State

Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a significant social problem globally. It comprises of various violent acts committed against victims due to socially imposed genderism (Wirtz, Perrin, Desgroppes, Phipps, Abdi, Ross, & Glass, 2018). The United Nations (UN, 2022) noted that gender -based violence is a pattern of behaviour in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner, including physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, and financial acts or threats of action that influence another person. It also manifests as economic abuse, intimidation, harassment, and stalking, and occurs in family circles as well as in the broader community (Thobejane, Luthada, & Mogorosi, 2018). Gender-based violence generally includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound another in a relationship. This form of violence is willfully directed at another with significant effects.

Globally, statistics provided by the Mankind Initiative showed that 2.5% of men across the globe were victim of partner abuse in 2018/19 while 13.8 percent of men (2.9 million) between the ages of 16 to

74 have suffered some form of domestic abuse between 2019/2020. The statistics further showed that domestic abuse affects one in six to seven men in their lifetime (Mankind Initiative, 2024)

In Nigeria, various bodies have revealed the problem of gender-based violence against men. For instance, the Lagos State Government, through its Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA), has reported 1,108 documented cases of domestic abuse against men over a span of six years (Punch, 2023). Also, a previous study conducted by Asekun-Olarinmoye, Asekun-Olarinmoye, Adebimpe, and Omisore (2019) revealed that gender-based violence against men is a reality in Nigeria and 25% of men have ever been victims of domestic violence. This is an indication that men in Benue State including men in Makurdi Local Government may also be caught up with the problem of gender-based violence in communities. This study will however focus on violence carried out against men by their wives.

Gender-based violence regardless of who is experiencing has significant negative effects and should not be encouraged against any gender or neglected based on the particular gender-suffering the ill. A study by Wirtz, et al, (2018) observed that gender-based violence disrupts the family structure, negatively impacts social networks, causes displacement and economic disruption, and engenders various conflict-related encounters. Gender-based violence also often leads to high rates of morbidity, depression, substance dependence, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide, and mortality (Taha, -Thomure, Milne, Kavanagh, & Stirling, 2022). For instance, Lloyd and Brustia (2018) noted that violence in the home is hazardous for children, since the psychological and mental impacts are varied and sometimes quiet

Theoretical framework

The paper anchored on two theories which are the Social Cognitive Learning (SCT) and the Frustration – Aggression Theories. The application of the both theories is to tackle the lapse of the one theory.

The Social Cognitive Learning Theory was developed by Albert Bandura (Bandura, 1986). According to this theory, behavior is determined by the persons thought processes, the environment and behavior itself. This means that individuals determine their own behavior while being influenced by the environmental factors and. Social cognitive theory emphasizes the role of observational learning with regard to the presence and influence of models. According to Bandura (1973) any behavior can be learned because people model behaviors they have been exposed to.

Bandura's social learning theory can also be used to explain the role of gender-based violence in intimate partner relationship. According to Allen, Swan & Raghavan (2009) social cognitive learning theory is one of the most popular explanatory perspectives in the marital violence literatures. When applied to the problem of gender-based violence people can model behavior that they have been exposed to as children. Violence could be learned through role models such as parents, siblings, relatives, and boyfriends/girlfriend either directly or indirectly. Modelling the actions of others could contribute to learning violent behavior (Miller, Lund, & Weatherly, 2012). According to Wareham, Boots, & Chavez (2009) by observing and learning, every individual is capable of having characteristics that he or she did not have in the beginning.

Frustration –Aggression Theory: The frustration–aggression theory was conceived in 1939 by John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Mowrer, and Robert Sears. (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939). The Frustration-Aggression Theory explains the link between frustration and aggression. The theory holds that aggression is the aftermaths of blocking, or frustrating a person's efforts to attain a goal. In the latter formulation, the theory stated that while frustration prompts a behavior that may or may not be aggressive, any aggressive behavior is the result of frustration, thus making frustration not sufficient, but a necessary condition for aggression. Whenever there is a failure to achieve a certain end goal, the perpetrator is frustrated and the frustration in turn leads to violence

Forms of Gender- Based Violence.

The 2019 Council of Europe outlined the forms of gender-based violence to include:

- Physical violence
- Verbal Violence
- Psychological /Emotional Violence

- Sexual violence
- Socio-economic violence

Methodology

The study was carried out in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State located in North- central Nigeria. The study focused on: an assessment of gender-based violence against Men in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. Makurdi Local Government was created in 1976 following the creation of Benue State with its headquarters in Makurdi town. According to Igunn (1999) in Agede, (2017), the origin of Makurdi town is a labor camp established about 1910 or soon after in connection with the survey of the Eastern railway and the search for a site for the Bridge over the River Benue. Politically, the local Government is made up of several wards including; Central ward, Old GRA, Fiidi, Agan, Wailomayo, Modern market, Bar, Mbalagh, Ankpa, Mission, North Bank 11 and Clark ward.

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. The population of this study includes the total population of men in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. The 2022 projected population of men in Makurdi is 230,591 persons. This was calculated using 3.1% annual growth rate for 16 years using the men's population figures from the 2006 population census which is 154,138. The study however focused on men who have ever been married only. The Cochran formula is given as $(N=Z^2 P (1-P)/d^2)$. Respondents for the study were purposively selected. Data was collected using questionnaire. A total of 424 questionnaires were distributed. The data collected were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics and qualitatively.

Results

Although a total of 424 copies of questionnaires were distributed, only 407 was found useful. The analysis of the quantitative data is based on the responses from the 407 copies that was found useful.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Frequency(N=407)	Percentage (100)
Age		
20-29	56	1.4
30-39	138	33.9
40-49	111	27.3
50-59	62	15.2
60 & above	40	9.8
Marital status		
Currently married	321	80.3
Divorced/Separated	70	17.2
Widowed	16	3.9
Educational background		
Non-formal	12	2.9
Primary	98	24.1
Secondary	173	42.5
Tertiary	124	30.5
Employment status		
Public sector employee	135	33.3
Private sector employee	98	24.1
Self-employed	123	30.2
Un-employed	51	12.5
Duration of marriage		
Less than 1 year	83	20.4
1-5 years	162	39.8
6-10 years	93	22.9

More than 10 years	69	17.0
Estimated monthly income		
20,000 and below	53	13.0
21,000-30, 000	70	17.2
31000-40, 000	100	24.6
41,000-50,000	48	11.8
51,000-60,000	85	20.9
Above 60,000	51	12.5
No. of wives at a time		
one	341	83.8
two	45	11.1
more than two	21	5.2

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 1: presented findings on socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Findings revealed that 138(33.9%) were within the ages of 30-39 years, 40-49 years (27.3%) while 60 and above (9.8%) of the sampled population. In terms of marital status, 321(80.3%) were currently married, 70(17.2%) were divorced/separated while 16(3.9%) were widowed. For educational status, 173 (42.5%) of the respondents had secondary education, 124 (30.5%) had tertiary education, 98 (24.1%) had primary education and only 12(2.9%) of the respondents had no formal education. This showed that most of the sampled population had acquired a form of formal education.

In terms of employment status, 135(33.3%) were employed in the public sector, 98(24.1%) were employed in private sector while 123(30.2%) were self-employed. Only 51(12.1%) of the respondents were not employed. The duration of marriage of the respondents indicated that 162 (39.8%) of the respondents have been married between 1-5 years, 93 (22.9%) of the respondents between 6-10 years while 83 (20.4%) of the respondents were married less than a year and 69(17.0%), more than 10 years. Majority of the respondents 341(83.8%) were married to one wife at a time. In terms of income, 100(24.6%) earn an estimated monthly income between 31,000-40,000 naira, 85(20.9%) with an estimated income between 51000-60000 naira.

Table 2: Prevalence of gender -based violence against men in Makurdi LGA

S/N	Gender based violence	Responses/percentages(N=407)			Total
		Often	None	Sometimes	
1	Experienced physical violence	52(12.8%)	253(62.2%)	102(25.1%)	407
2	Experienced verbal violence	175(43.0%)	7(1.7%)	225(55.3%)	407
3	Experience sexual violence	172(42.3%)	33(8.1%)	202(49.6%)	407
4	Experienced psychological violence	109(26.8%)	69(17.0%)	229(55.5%)	407
5	Experienced emotional violence	206(50.6%)	21(5.2%)	180(44.2%)	407
6	Prevalence-of gender-based violence generally	80(19.7%)	58(14.3%)	269(66.1%)	407

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 2: presented findings on prevalence of gender-based violence against men in the study location. Findings reveal 19.7% of the respondents often experience gender-based violence carried out on them by their wives while majority 66.1% sometimes experience gender-based violence. This shows cumulatively, (85.8%) experience the problem of gender -based violence in the course of their marriage. Among the different types of gender-based violence, majority (50.6%) experience emotional violence while 44.2% sometimes experience it. 43.0% experience verbal violence while 49.6% sometimes experience it. 42.3% experience sexual violence while 49.6% sometimes experience it, 102(25.1%) of the respondents indicated they sometimes experience physical violence and only 52(12.8%) of the respondents often experienced physical violence. Cumulatively, this shows that 37.9% experience physical violence.

Table 3:Forms of gender-based violence on men in Makurdi LGA

Variables	Responses		
	Often	Undecided	Sometimes
Physical violence	1 (0.2%)	399 (98.0%)	7 (1.7%)
Wife beats up	3 (0.7%)	372 (91.4%)	32 (7.9%)
Scalded (burn with hot liquid)	13 (3.2%)	291 (71.5%)	103 (25.3%)
Push roughly, Slap or Kick	69 (17.0%)	31 (7.6%)	307 (75.4%)
Hit/throw objects at to hurt	19 (4.7%)	289 (71.0%)	99 (24.8%)
Use sharp weapons (razor, knife, broken bottles)			
Verbal violence			
Wife call names	36 (8.8%)	169 (41.5%)	202 (49.6%)
Makes derogatory statements	9 (2.2%)	288 (70.8%)	110 (27.0%)
Insults /talk down on	12 (2.9%)	103 (25.3%)	292 (71.7%)
Wife says things to belittle	57 (14.0%)	29 (7.1%)	321 (78.9%)
Verbally intimidates (shouts at/ yell/threatens)	68 (16.7%)	36 (8.8%)	303 (74.4%)
Sexual violence			
Denies sex as a form of punishment/threaten to stop engaging in sexual activities	168 (41.3%)	21 (5.2%)	218 (53.6%)
Force to engage in oral sexual activity against wish	15 (3.7%)	283 (69.5%)	109 (26.8%)
Force to have sex with a condom against wish	79 (19.4%)	123 (30.2%)	205 (50.4%)
Intentionally cause injury to private part	16 (3.9%)	377 (92.6%)	14 (3.4%)
Makes hurtful statements about private parts/sexual performance	2 (0.5%)	234 (57.5%)	171 (42.0%)

Psychological violence

Restricts from attending to needs of parent's, family	33 (8.1%)	163 (40.0%)	211 (51.8%)
/friends	21 (5.2%)	199 (48.9%)	187 (46.0%)
Threaten to leave or frustrate spouse to leave the house	26 (6.4%)	249 (61.2%)	132 (32.4%)
Threaten to hurt husband	47 (11.5%)	301 (74.0%)	59 (14.5%)
Threatens to hurt or damage any of spouse's valued possession	101 (24.8%)	118 (29.0%)	188 (46.2%)
Monitors spouse movement/ stalks when with other people			

Emotional violence

Gives Silent treatment to hurt emotions	151 (37.1%)	42 (10.3%)	214 (52.6%)
Harbors malicious grudges	111 (27.3%)	37 (9.1%)	259 (63.6%)
Ignores feelings	22 (5.4%)	64 (15.7%)	321 (78.9%)
Emotional blackmail using threats so as to control	16 (3.9%)	183 (45.0%)	208 (51.1%)
Shames /Guilt trip to upset	7 (1.7%)	127 (31.2%)	273 (67.1%)

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 3: presented findings on forms of gender-based violence among men in the study location. For physical violence, only 1 respondent representing 0.2% indicated that he is often beaten by his wife while 7(1.7%) indicated they were sometimes beaten by their wives. This shows cumulatively that only (1.9%) experience the problem of wives physically beating them in the course of their marriage. 69 (17.0%) admitting that their wives often hit and throw things at them while 307 (75.4%) indicated their wives sometimes hit or throw things at them, cumulatively this means that 92.4% have ever experienced the problem of wives hitting or throwing things at them. Other forms of physical violence men often experience in the study location are scolding (0.7%), pushing roughly, being slapped or kicked (3.2%) and use of sharp weapons on them (4.7%).

In terms of sexual violence, the most common form of sexual violence against men in the study location is denial of sex as a form of punishment and threatening to stop engaging in sexual activities with 41.1% admitting that their wives often do this and 53.6% admitting that it happens to them sometimes. Cumulatively, 94.9% of respondents have ever experienced sexual denial. The least form of sexual violence as revealed is intentional causing of injury to private parts with 3.9 % admitting that they often experience it and 3.4% indicating that it happens to them sometimes. Cumulatively this shows that only 3.9% have ever experienced intentional cause of injury to their private parts.

The findings show that psychological violence is also carried out against men in Makurdi and the common form of psychological violence is monitoring husband's movement and stalking with a cumulative frequency of 71.0%, followed by restricting from attending to needs of parents, family and friends with cumulative frequency of 59.9%, then threatening to leave husband or frustrate to leave with a cumulative

frequency of 51.2%. The least form of psychological violence carried out on men in the study location is threatening to hurt or damage any of men's valued positions with a cumulative frequency of 26.0%.

In terms of emotional violence, findings represented in the table showed that the most common forms of emotional violence carried out on men is harboring of malicious grudges with a cumulative frequency of 90.9%, next to this is silent treatment to hurt with cumulative frequency of 89.7%, ignoring feelings (84.3%), shaming/guilt tripping to upset (68.8%). The least common form of emotional violence as revealed in the study is emotional blackmail using treats so as to control (55%).

Discussion of Findings

Prevalence of Gender- Based Violence against Men in Makurdi, Benue State.

Findings on prevalence of gender- based violence against men in Makurdi, Benue State revealed that many of the sampled population percentage have ever experienced the problem of gender -based violence in the course of their marriage. A previous study in Nigeria by Asekun-Olarinmoye, etal (2019) where primary and secondary data were used to analyzed the problem of gender –based violence against men found that men in Nigeria generally suffer the problem of domestic violence carried out by their wives. Other studies in other parts of Africa also revealed prevalence of gender-based violence. For instance, a demographic and health survey in Ugandan revealed that almost half of ever married men in Uganda had experienced some form of domestic violence (Uganda Bureau of Statistics,2018) and in Tanzania, Mulawa etal (2018) observed that men suffer the problem of domestic violence as much as women.

Men however need to wake up and go past the shame they may feel due to societal expectations and cry out as loud as they can when abused. This will reduce their chances of continually being abused because the long-term effects of not coming out may be colossal and may come with devastating consequences. There is no shame in admitting to being abused. It is okay for a man to cry because violence against any human being whether it is perpetrated by a man or by a woman is dire to the individual.

Effects of Gender- Based Violence against Men in Makurdi, Benue State.

Findings on effects of gender-based violence on men in this study revealed various effects ranging from injuries, depression, suicidal feelings, avoiding staying at home, increases in use of alcohol and substance abuse, agitation and sadness, feelings of ending marriage, affects blood pressure, causes trauma among other effects. Verena and Andreas (2020) carried out a study on domestic violence against men and prevalence risk factors revealed similar to findings of this study that gender-based violence have various effects on men and these includes mostly minor physical injuries, impaired physical health, mental health problems such as anxiety or a disruptive disorder, and increased consumption of alcohol and/or illegal drugs.

Conclusion

The study concludes that although the problem of gender-based violence in the society has for a long time been recognized more as a problem affecting majorly women, men in the society today are increasingly being exposed to the challenge of gender-based violence as well and many men suffer the problem of gender-based violence in their marriages with their wives being the perpetrators of this ugly trend. This study demonstrated that gender-based violence affects men in various ways with significant effects such as causing them injuries, depression, suicidal feelings, increases in use of alcohol and substance abuse, causes agitation and sadness, affects blood pressure, causes them traumatic experiences among other negative effects yet the problem of violence against men does not get as much attention as it should globally.

Gender-based violence against men carried out by their wives in the society should therefore be an area of worry that requires serious concern and attention because of effects it has on male victims. This violence does not only affect the men who are direct victims but the effects extend to families, communities and the society at large.

Recommendations

1. As men are increasingly becoming victims of gender-based violence, rather than pretend it doesn't exist, men experiencing abuse in their marriages should cry. Policy makers in Nigeria like the national assembly should make necessary amendments to laws concerning gender-based violence to incorporate men in Nigeria too.
2. Holistic approaches to the issues of domestic violence should be taken generally on domestication of laws against violence perpetrators regardless of the gender.
3. There is need to urgently create public awareness on the problem of gender-based violence against men and educate the public, including victims, about the different forms of abuse that can occur against any gender. This can be done by the utilization of existing structures like the NGOs, the Federal Government and Benue State Government structures.
4. There is need to design programmes and establish agencies specifically aimed to intervene and help male victims of gender-based violence.

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