

Violence Against Women: An Exposé of the Nature, Forms and Effects in Contemporary Social Life

Chukwujekwu Charles Onwuka

Abstract

Violence against women has been a very problematic issue over the decades and has continued to linger irrespective of concerted efforts to bring it to the barest minimum. For this reason, this paper critically looks at the various forms of violence against women such as domestic, social, political, traditional violence etc. The purpose is to highlight the fundamental and essential component of this social malaise with the intention of proffering strategies that could go a long way in averting their occurrence in the contemporary age. Documentary research which attempts to explore available literature and sifting relevant information associated with the topic under discussion was used in determining the nature, forms and effects of violence against women. Feminist theory was adopted in explaining violence against women. This theory seeks to explain the position of women in society for the purpose of bringing about liberating social change. To this end, the researcher proffered possible solutions in order to reduce violence against women. The researcher concluded by saying that violence against women has to be seriously addressed by stakeholders, human rights activists and governments. This paper therefore recommends that concerted efforts by individuals, cooperate organizations, governments should be undertaken to ensure that this menace is routed out in this age of civilization.

Introduction

Violence against women is one of the most widespread violations of human rights. It can include physical, enslavement, sexual, psychological and economic abuse, and it cuts across boundaries of age, race, culture, wealth and geography. It takes place in the home, on the streets, in schools, the workplace, in farm fields, refugee camps, during conflicts and crises. It has many manifestations ranging from the most universally prevalent forms of domestic and sexual violence, to harmful practices, abuse during pregnancy and the so-called honour killings etc. It is equally an off-shoot and most times a demonstration of power by men as they struggle to assert their acclaimed position as heads of their households. It mostly comes into play when men use physical discipline against their wives. Giddens *et al.* (2005:296) quoting UNFPA (2003) argued that one out of three women has been beaten, coerced into sex, or abused in some other way. This is mostly carried out often by someone she knows, including her husband or a male relative. Human Rights Watch (1995) opined that more women are injured as a result of beatings by spouses than by any other cause. This is a problem that has been ignored by most governments. Giddens (2005) quoting Wright (1995)

cited some examples. For instance, a report shows that in Japan, three out of five women have been sexually or physically abused by a partner. He also said that in India, an estimated twenty thousand brides were killed between 1990 and 1995. They are usually burned alive for bringing an inadequate dowry to their husbands' families. Even the recent Jos crises in Nigeria had equally shown violence against women. This is a case where so many women were killed alongside with their children. If it were to be in the western world, the country will apologise openly for manslaughter. But in the case of Nigeria, anything goes. Most importantly, the issue of limited reporting of violence by victims should be discouraged.

In the United States, many scholars argue that the increased depiction of violence in movies, on television, and elsewhere in American popular culture contributes to a climate in which women are often victimized. The most common manifestation of violence against women is rape, although stalking and sexual harassment increasingly are seen as a form of physical violence as well (Giddens *et al.*, 2005:296).

Macionis (2006) opined that violence against women also occurs in casual relationships. To him most rapes involve known men and often trusted by their victims. This is a case whereby men have carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will. Macionis (2006) quoting Herman (2001) argue that the extent of sexual abuse reveals that the tendency toward sexual violence is built into our way of life. He went further to state that all forms of violence against women ranging from the catcalls that intimidate women on city streets to a pinch in a crowded subway to physical assaults that occur at home express what she calls a "rape culture" of men trying to dominate women. To him, sexual violence is fundamentally about power, not sex, and therefore should be understood as a dimension of gender discrimination.

The Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women Development, in Beijing in 1995, defined violence against women as: "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" (UNICEF, 2001:192). Furthermore, violence against women is equally built into other cultures in many different ways. One case in point is the practice of female genital mutilation - a painful and often dangerous surgical procedure. Giddens *et al.* (2005:296) stated that between 100 to 130 million girls and women worldwide have been subjected to "general mutilation" while an equal number are "missing" partly as the result of female infanticide in cultures where boys are more highly valued than girls.

Globally, women got inspirations from the works of radical women activists and writers in the 18th century that focused on the repression of women during the Victorian periods. At that time, women and girls were restricted to washing clothes, cooking and tending children at home, etc. while sons and men were given formal education. Males were thought to be superior not only physically but also intellectually. Women were culturally expected to accept their subordinate position, and even now some women especially in the rural areas still uphold their women's traditional roles as wives, mothers and housekeepers, and as contented beneficiaries of men's (husbands') protection (Otite and Ogiwo, 2006:301).

In other words, the question on the lips of many is "what changes has the World Conference on Women (WCM) held in 1995 in Beijing, China brought to violence against women especially in Nigeria"? The situation to which women in Nigeria are exposed has not

really changed for the better compared to what it used to be during the pre-colonial era. Therefore this work will look into ways of correcting these anomalies perpetrated against women in the society.

Operationalisation

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defined violence as the act of using great force on people to make them do something. It further described it as the act of rioting.

Encarta Encyclopaedia (2002) described it as a form of bullying, whereby attackers exert authority by violence because they fear they have no other means of control over a situation. It is a threatening behaviour or actual harm inflicted upon a person by another or inflicted upon a group of persons by a person or group by another group (riot).

Violence can be within the family circle i.e. “domestic violence” where it is thought of as being inflicted by men upon their female partners (wife battering). It could be “social violence” where the men choose to throw money around outside their matrimonial home or even going to joint (beer parlour) to cool off with another woman. Or where lecturers decide to award marks in exchange for sex. It could equally be “political violence” where women are always the target or at the receiving end. The case of Jos massacre clearly depicts this. It could as well be “traditional violence” where women experience all manner of harmful practices. Other form of violence can come in the form of child abuse when it is inflicted upon children by their parents.

The United Nations defines violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life).

Forms of Violence

Domestic Violence

This act which is aimed against the women folk in our society is a condemnable and disgraceful act which should be discouraged in all form. According to Sawyer (2001:19) domestic violence in most cases is from husband to wife, but there are so many dimensions to it. In his view, the one that we know of and which is most common is that of husband against wife or parents against children. Apart from the usually physical assault against the wife, a husband can perpetrate domestic violence against his wife by insisting on having sex at all cost with his wife when she is ill. Also if the husband refuses to give his wife monetary allowance for the upkeep of the family, and also the decision of a man to deny a wife the right of association, is definitely a kind of violence.

Unfortunately, in Africa, women and children are believed to be properties of men and as such subject to their control. With that belief, the boy-child grows up to regard himself as a “Lord” and master and it is worse if such a boy is brought up where he sees domestic violence everyday.

Otite and Ogonwo (2006) assert that the degrees of harmony, happiness, security, mutual trust, and dependence are important conditions which determine the presence or absence of domestic violence. To them men carry out domestic violence through wife-beating, slapping, tooth breaking, injuring, etc. They equally stated that in such events wives may still remain in marriage.

One common question about domestic violence is why victims stay with their abusers. The answers are complex and stem from sociological, psychological and economic factors. Victims tend to believe that the batterer will change, but they also find they have few options. They may perceive that leaving will be more dangerous given that violence can escalate when the abuser thinks he/she has lost control. Many women are also unable to support their children and their living expenses without a husband's income. Mandatory arrest laws in cases of domestic violence exacerbate this problem because they may, despite their intentions, discourage women from reporting violence for fear their batterer will lose his job (Andersen and Taylor, 2004:431). Furthermore, women still remain in marriage in the interest of their children and property, and because of the effectiveness of social pressures to do so from friends, colleagues, members of one's religious organisation and interventions from several categories of kin.

Social Violence

Some men are so irresponsible. There are some men who don't care about their family, but would choose to throw money around outside, most times, on other women. Some of them drink themselves to stupor that they become a disgrace to the family. Yet, there are some who would lie to their wives that they were going for a business meeting outside their location meanwhile they were somewhere cooling off with another woman. It is so painful. Some women have been left to take care of the responsibilities of the house alone, while their husbands are busy taking care of their concubines. God instituted marriage as an avenue for a man and woman to come together and enjoy the company of each other. It was not meant to be a battle ground but the devil has turned so many husbands against their wives that every day, what you see is even enough to discourage the unmarried ones.

Otite and Ogionwo (2006:299) posit that social violence could be experienced in the way a man talks to a woman, what he writes to her or about her, where and how he touches her body, especially the "wrong" or sex-arousing parts, and a slight or severe hostility to her can be made a subject of complaint about sexual harassment. Again, if a man tears a woman's dress, or "eyes" her in a repugnant way, seizes her dress or books or any property etc. a case of sexual harassment would have been made. Furthermore, if a male boss maltreats a female employee, or deprives her of promotion or appointment because she refuses to have sexual intercourse with him, or if sexual intercourse is made a condition for such promotion or appointment, this would be a case of sexual harassment. Social violence could also refer to a situation in which a lecturer demands sexual gratification before a female student can be enrolled for a course or before she is given access to textbooks and research materials, or before she passes a particular examination, or indeed before she receives the attention of the supervisor of her work.

Furthermore, social violence could also be felt in times of war. Chang and Kirby (1997) observed that Japanese soldiers raped as many as twenty thousand women when they conquered the city of Nanking in China in 1935. This act is said to be one of the well-known modern cases of mass rape by conquering troops. They equally said that American soldiers equally committed rapes during the civil war and the Vietnam War.

Stetz and Oh (2001) posits that rape is often an explicit military strategy. They gave an instance, that during World War II, Japanese soldiers forced as many as two hundred thousand young women and girls to serve as "comfort women" for Japanese troops. These women were forced to work as sex slaves in military brothels throughout the Pacific. They

equally observed that this act caused many to die in captivity, often of despair. Also a large number committed suicide. There are many other things that women suffer in the hands of men and it takes the grace of God to handle the situation very well.

Political Violence

In the case of Jos massacre, the city witnessed an orgy of political violence. In January, 2010, when the first bloodletting took place, it claimed many lives. In the latest violence, blood-thirsty hounds had attacked Dogon-Nahawa, a village dominated by Christians and located a few kilometers to Jos. The attackers invaded the village in the early hours of that day and left in their trail blood, sorrow and tears. Umahi and Ugbudian (2010) stated that attackers had overran Dogon-Nahawa village a little after midnight, while the villagers were asleep. The attackers had first set their victims' thatched houses on fire before shooting indiscriminately. The shooting according to them was not meant to kill the villagers but to cause them to run out of their homes and therefore, face horrible death. The victims were cut down by their attackers, in cold blood with machetes. Skulls were cut open, and brains spilled. People were disemboweled. Limbs were severed. The victims included men, women and children. Umahi and Ugbudian (2010) further demonstrated violence against women by revealing that the majority of those who were killed were kids, women and old men, who could not run when they discovered that they were under attack. Also Scroll Nigeria (2010:32) has it that because of violence against women, Nigerian women are sad at the moment. The reason is that lots of lives have been wasted in the carnage of ethno-religious crises in Jos, particularly women and little children.

Similarly, Umahi (2010) had his own version of the story on violence against women in this case and lamented that blood flowed freely in the Dogon Nahawa village in Jos South and Barkin Ladi local government areas of Plateau State. He stated that this was the latest version of the tradition of bloodshed the zone had adopted. At this latest orgy, over 500 persons were brutally murdered and many wounded by persons suspected to be Fulani herdsmen. He also stated that the invaders came like thieves in the wee hours on the fateful day and massacred the victims, mainly women and children while asleep.

Aleshinloye-Agboola (2010:47) narrating, the ordeal passed by some survivors, saw really where violence against women was at its peak. One of the survivors said that "when they woke up in the morning, they saw many headless bodies of their children and women. Their houses were burnt and many were left with no wives and children." The fact that we now have single gifted women playing important roles in national, political and the economic life of Nigeria has changed substantially the general perception of women as a disadvantaged sex-group in many male-dominated societies.

Traditional Violence

In some parts of Nigeria, to be precise among Igbos, there is a thriving tradition of abuse of women and denial of their fundamental human rights. Here widows bear the greatest burden of womanhood. For instance, once a woman's husband dies, her suffering begins. Relatives of her dead husband intimidate, harass and deprive her of her late husband's property. This is done especially if she had no son. Some are ejected from the matrimonial homes after being made to undergo dehumanizing rituals. Some others may institute court cases against helpless widows to deny them of what should be their rightful property. Many are even denied their husband's benefits and gratuities. Some others are

made to sleep in the same room where her late husband's corpse is kept. Also others are equally made to drink water which was used in bathing the corpse of her late husband. All these are done, according to them, to prove her innocence or otherwise regarding her husband's death. As if that is not enough, some men just decide they have had enough and abandon their wives and children to marry new wives.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) otherwise known as female circumcision is one of the most serious forms of violence against women. This is a barbaric act which women and adolescent girls are made to undergo in their life time. The practice of FGM is a total or partial removal of the external female genitals. FGM forms an important part of the rites of passage ceremony for some communities, marking the female's genital organs, her sexuality will be controlled, but above all, it is to ensure a woman's virginity before marriage and chastity thereafter. In fact, FGM imposes on women and the girl child a catalogue of health complications and untold psychological problems. The practice of FGM violates, among other international human rights laws, the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health. Egbutem (2002:15) identified three types of female genital mutilation. The first type involves the excision of the clitoris and the labia minora. Type two involves the removal of the clitoris and the labis minora, and thirdly the incision of the labia magora to create new surfaces that are stitched together to cover the urethra and the entrance to the vagina with a hood of skin. This leaves a very small opening for the passage of urine and menstrual flow.

The belief why it is being practiced is that female genital mutilation is part of adolescent initiation rites which produce responsible adults for the community. Another reason given to it is that it promotes beauty and cleanliness. The understanding is that the female genital is ugly and will grow to be unsightly if it is not cut back. Genitals that do not have clitoris serve the male interest because such genitals enhance the husband's sexual pleasure.

Female genital mutilation place girls and women at risk of infections, chronic and painful complications of their gynecological and genitourinary tract. Top on the list of these infections is the dreaded Human Immune Deficiency Virus (HIV), which leads to AIDS. Other associated problems include bleeding, urinary retention, infection and injury.

In some countries, weddings are preceded by the payment of an agreed-upon dowry by the bride's family. Failure to pay the dowry can lead to violence. In Bangladesh, a bride whose dowry was deemed too small was disfigured after her husband threw acid on her face. In India, an average of five women a day are burned in dowry-related disputes (<http://www.un.org/rights/dpi1772e.htm>).

Early marriage is another traditional practices facing girls/women in Nigeria, particularly in the North. It has become a widespread practice that a huge number of girls are married off in their early ages; at the age of 11, 12, or 13. This practice does not give the girls the opportunity to give their consent, and most often they are given out to much older men. Girls of this age are not yet ripe for marriage, hence they do not know all it takes to be a wife, because their bodies are not fully mature for the function which they are exposed to perform, such as child bearing. This accounts for the high prevalence of girls and women suffering from vesico-vaginal festiulae (v.v.f) in the North. This is a situation where a woman will not have control over her urinating habit, because she was exposed to child-bearing early when her body has not matured to perform such function.

Challenging Traditional Attitudes

The meaning of gender and sexuality and the balance of power between women and men at all levels of society must be reviewed. Combating violence against women requires challenging the way gender roles and power relations are articulated in society. In many countries women have a low status. They are considered as inferior and there is a strong belief that men are superior to them and even own them.

Changing people's attitude and mentality towards women will take a long time -- at least a generation, many believe, and perhaps longer. Nevertheless, raising awareness of the issue of violence against women, and educating boys and men to view women as valuable partners in life, in the development of a society and in the attainment of peace are just as important as taking legal steps to protect women's human rights.

It is also important that in order to prevent violence, non-violent means be used to resolve conflict between all members of society. Breaking the cycle of abuse will require concerted collaboration and action between governmental and non-governmental actors, including educators, health-care authorities, legislators, the judiciary and the mass media (<http://www.un.org/rights/dpi1772e.htm>).

Women and Violence

Violence affects the lives of millions of women worldwide, in all socio-economic and educational classes. It cuts across cultural and religious barriers, impeding the right of women to participate fully in society. Violence against women takes a dismaying variety of forms, from domestic abuse and rape to child marriages and female circumcision. All are violations of the most fundamental human rights. In a statement to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995, the United Nations Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, said that violence against women is a universal problem that must be universally condemned. The Secretary-General noted that domestic violence has been on the increase. Studies in 10 countries, he said, have found that between 17 per cent and 38 per cent of women have suffered physical assaults by a partner. In the Platform for action, the core document of the Beijing Conference, Governments declared that "violence against women constitutes a violation of basic human rights and is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace" (<http://www.un.org/rights/dpi1772e.htm>). Adewole (2002:13) argues that Nigerian women and girls are no doubt marginalized as a result of traditional and cultural practices, which impinges on their development. In spite of various moves by government, non-governmental organisation (NGO), and programmes enunciated by the UN for their empowerment and social upliftment, women are still greatly disadvantaged in many respects.

For many centuries, women lacked legal rights in most parts of the world, and husbands, who were responsible for their wives behaviour, were allowed to chastise their wives physically. For example, the common law in 17th century England allegedly permitted a husband to whip his wife provided that the switch was no bigger than his thumb (Encarta Encyclopaedia, 2002).

In Nigeria, the girl-child is enmeshed in socio-cultural moves that deprive her of educational empowerment. Nwankwo (1997:104) posits that there is gender disparity on primary school curriculum. In terms of enrolment in secondary schools, males have higher percentage point (28.5%) as against females (24.7%). In the area of decision making, it reveals that women's seats in Nigeria is less than three (3) percent. This unavoidable position

which women are placed in Nigeria has made them to be seen as “never do good” in our society, hence they are regarded as men’s property.

Rape and Sexual Harassment

Rape can occur anywhere, even in the family, where it can take the form of marital rape or incest. It occurs in the community, where a woman can fall prey to any abuser. It also occurs in situations of armed conflict and in refugee camps. Giddens *et al.* (2005) sees rape as an act of violence rather than a purely sexual act. To them, rape is often carefully planned rather than performed on the spur of the moment to satisfy some uncontrollable sexual desire. This is a human right abuse against any woman, because such act is perpetrated against her wish. Many rapes involve beatings, knifings, and even murder. Even when rape leaves no physical wounds, it is a highly traumatic violation of a woman’s person that leaves long-lasting psychological scars.

Sexual harassment is a growing concern for women especially in their workplace. Employers abuse their authority to seek sexual favours from their female co-workers or subordinates, sometimes promising promotions or other forms of career advancement or simply creating an untenable and hostile work environment. Women who refuse to give in to such unwanted sexual advances often run the risk of anything from demotion to dismissal.

Prostitution and Trafficking

Many women are forced into prostitution either by their parents, husbands or boyfriends or as a result of the difficult economic and social conditions in which they find themselves. They are also lured into prostitution, sometimes by “mail-order bride” agencies that promise to find them a husband or a job in a foreign country. As a result, they very often find themselves illegally confined in brothels in slavery-like conditions where they are physically abused and their passports withheld (<http://www.un.org/rights/dpi1772e.htm>).

Most women initially victimized by sexual traffickers have little inkling of what awaits them. They generally get a very small percentage of what the customer pays to the pimp or the brothel owner. Once they are caught up in the system there is practically no way out, and they find themselves in a very vulnerable situation. Since prostitution is illegal in many countries, it is difficult for prostitutes to come forward and ask for protection if they become victims of rape or want to escape from brothels. Customers, on the other hand, are rarely the object of penal laws. Trafficking in women and girl children has reached alarming proportions, especially in Asian countries (<http://www.un.org/rights/dpi1772e.htm>). Many women and girl children are trafficked across borders, often with the complicity of border guards. In one incident, five young prostitutes burned to death in a brothel fire because they had been chained to their beds. At the same time, sex tours of developing countries are a well-organized industry in several European and other industrialized countries (<http://www.un.org/rights/dpi1772e.htm>). Similarly, recently, 30th of November to be precise, it was announced on air that a prostitute was discovered in a hotel room in Enugu, dead with hanging rope on her neck. The Special Rapporteur has called on Governments to take action to protect young girls from being recruited as prostitutes and to closely monitor recruiting agencies.

Violence against Women in Situations of Armed Conflict

Rape has been widely used as a weapon of war whenever armed conflicts arise between different parties. It has been used all over the world: in Chiapas, Mexico, in Rwanda, in Kuwait, in Haiti, in Colombia (<http://www.un.org/rights/dpi1772e.htm>).

Women and girl children are frequently victims of gang rape committed by soldiers from all sides of a conflict. Such acts are done mainly to trample upon the dignity of the victims. Rape has been used to reinforce the policy of ethnic cleansing in the war that has been tearing apart the former Yugoslavia. The so-called “comfort women” of colonized or occupied countries who became sexual slaves to Japanese soldiers during the Second World War have dramatized the problem in a historical context. Many of these women are now coming forward and demanding compensation for their suffering from Japanese authorities. Such rape is the symbolic rape of the community, the destruction of the fundamental elements of a society and culture, the ultimate humiliation of the male enemy, the report by the Special Rapporteur noted (<http://www.un.org/rights/dpi1772e.htm>). It stressed the need to hold the perpetrators of such crimes fully accountable.

Theoretical Framework

Feminist theory was used in this research to demonstrate clearly violence against women. Feminist theory refers to analyses that seek to understand the position of women in society for the purposes of bringing about liberating social changes (Andersen and Taylor, 2004:371).

Andersen (2003) identified four major frameworks developed in feminist theory which includes: liberal feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism, and the multiracial feminism. Each perspective here provides unique ways to look at the experiences of women and men in society. In explaining this research work, radical feminism was used. According to Andersen and Taylor (2004) radical feminism sees patriarchy as the main cause of violence against women. Also Giddens (2004:115) assert that radical feminism is the belief that men are responsible for and benefit from the exploitation of women. According to him, the analysis of patriarchy, that is, the systematic domination of females by males is of central concern to this branch of feminism. Radical feminists often concentrate on the family as one of the main sources of violence against women in society. They argue that men exploit women by relying on the free domestic labour that women provide in the home. As a group, men also deny women access to positions of power and influence in society.

The origin of violence against women lies in men’s control over women’s bodies. In other words, they see violence against women in the form of rape, sexual harassment, wife-beating, and sexual abuse, as mechanisms that men use to assert their power in society. Radical feminists think that change cannot come about through the existing system because that system is controlled and dominated by men. Parting with liberal feminists who see state reform as holding the promise to free women through legislative action and political participation, radical feminists see “the state as male” and it cannot be the source of change on women’s behalf. Finally, it is the view of the researcher that change will eventually come and women will start gaining grounds but will be evolutionarily carried out.

Causes of Violence Against Women

There are various causes of violence against women. But few causes were discussed under the sub-headings below.

(i) **Alcohols and Drugs**

A man who is addicted to drugs (hemp or cocaine) is likely to beat his wife when he is under the influence of alcohol or drug. It has been estimated that violence is twice more likely in families with alcohol problems than in those without (Encarta Encyclopaedia, 2002). When a man is drunk, any little thing done by the wife irritates him and the only way to express his irritated mood is by beating the wife – wife battering.

(ii) **Unemployment**

In domestic violence against women, attackers exert authority by violence because they feel they have no other means of control over a situation. When a man has no job that yields him money for the family upkeep, he is always or often aggressive and the nearest person to lay his aggression on is his wife; thus making the woman always afraid of even talking to him.

(iii) **Financial Hardship**

This factor could be found effective in families where actually the man is employed but his wages are not often paid and so there is no sufficient money for his needs and that of the family. Such man can be aggressive too and tempted to be beating the wife when she requests for money.

(iv) **Illiteracy**

This factor could as well cause violence against women. Some studies have detected certain trends among abusers; they tend to be young (in their 30s or younger) and have not been educated beyond secondary school level. So such people do not know much about caring for women and could have learnt this (violence) from his parents. Domestic violence also occurs among middle class, educated people (Encarta Encyclopaedia, 2002).

(v) **Selfishness**

This occurs often in families where the man practice the use of power or authority on his wife – stressing that after all, he is the head of the family and therefore, his wife has no say other than to act in line with the command of his husband whether she likes it or not. This happens in families where the man does not see his marriage as companionship but always regards his wife as his property that he can always command at his own will.

Effects of Violence Against Women in the Contemporary Social Life

(i) **Poor Upbringing of Children**

Psychologists have pointed out that upbringing plays a crucial role. People who were mistreated in childhood or who witnessed violence between their parents are more likely to mistreat their own offspring – their people from non-violent homes. In addition, women who witnessed spouse abuse in childhood are particularly likely to become victims of it in later life.

For children and youth, violence in the family often has a traumatic effect, causing their behaviour to change. It is typical for them to be afraid, upset and angry. Even if they seem to be coping well, children need extra attention and care. Regardless of their age, children from violent homes are at an increased risk of behavioural and developmental

problems. They often suffer from anxiety and depression, and they may exhibit more aggressive, antisocial, inhibited or fearful behaviours. Even if they have not been assaulted themselves, children who are exposed to violence are emotionally abused. They share similar experience with those children who are themselves physically abused. Children who witness violence in the home often have a persistent fear for their own safety and the safety of brothers, sisters and the battered parent. They may also blame themselves for not being able to stop the violence (for example, by behaving better). For these children, feelings of self-blame, guilt, anger and fear about being different from other children may be more acute. They need help to understand that they did not cause the violence and could not have stopped it. They need to know that it is okay for them to feel angry and sad about losses that have resulted from the violence. Many children who are brought up in a violent home may have criminal records for violence outside the family. A violent home has less time for proper upbringing of their children (<http://www.phac-aspc.oc.ca/publicat/mh-sm/divorce/2-eng.php>).

(ii) **Punishment/Infection**

Women who are asked to drink the water which is used to bath the corpse of the husband because she is accused of killing him is only being a victim of this violence and could develop one or more type of sickness. Again, the mutilation of female genital organ places girls and women at risk of infection and chronic/painful complications of their gynecological and genitanirary tract. These infections could range from HIV, AIDS etc. this affects the growth and development of the family in the sense that the money which could have been used for the upkeep of the family will now be used for the treatment of these sicknesses.

(iii) **Divorce**

A man may inflict violence on his wife by wanting to make love with his wife even when she is ill or when she has just been delivered of a baby newly. If the woman refuses and the man insist, the woman may run away from the house and this may eventually lead to divorce and such family cannot grow. Again, when a man forces his wife to have sex with other men to produce children for him due to the reason that he is impotent, and the women would not want to comply, such could lead to divorce and hence retard the growth of the family.

(iv) **Neglect/Child Abuse**

Child abuse refers to a situation in which a child is suffering serious physical injury inflicted by other than accidental means, is suffering harm by reason of neglect, malnutrition or sexual abuse, is going without necessary basic physical care or is growing up under conditions which threaten his or her physical and emotional survival (UNICEF, 2001).

In a household where there are only female children, the man (i.e. the father) may want one of the girls to stay and bear more children so that there could be the chance of getting a male child. This is a form of violence and child abuse and any such child who agrees to do that will gain no respect from the community/people as she sleeps from one man to another. Also such female child has the tendency of suffering later in life because her father who introduced her to such life will die one day and leaving her to carry the responsibility of training her children alone without any husband. Not only that, she could equally exposed to some sexually transmitted diseases as she sleep with different men. In the case of women trafficking or prostitution, this is a form of violence on women and such has no respect in the society. They are not regarded anywhere even though they may have money because they don't have any right for the fact that they are not married.

Legal Steps to Criminalize Violence Against Women

In recent years some countries have taken significant steps towards improving laws relating to violence against women. For example:

- In July 1991, Mexico revised its rape law in several important ways. A provision was eliminated that allowed a man who rapes a minor to avoid prosecution if he agrees to marry her. Now judges are required to hand down a decision regarding access to an abortion within five working days.
- On 9 June 1994, the Organization of American States adopted the Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women (also called Convention of Belém do Pará), a new international instrument that recognizes all gender-based violence as an abuse of human rights. This Convention provides an individual right of petition and a right for non-governmental organizations to lodge complaints with the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights.
- In Australia, a National Committee on Violence against Women was established to coordinate the development of policy, legislation and law enforcement at the national level as well as community education on violence against women.
- In 1991, the Government of Canada announced a new four-year Family Violence Initiative intended to mobilize community action, strengthen Canada's legal framework, establish services on Indian reserves and in Inuit communities, develop resources to help victims and stop offenders, and provide housing for abused women and children.
- In Turkey, a Ministry of State for Women was established whose main goals are, among others, to promote women's rights and strengthen their role in economic, social, political and cultural life. Legal measures are being adopted towards the elimination of violence against women. The establishment of special courts to deal with violence is envisaged. Psychological treatment for abused women is also planned, along with the establishment of women's shelters around the country. Specially trained female police officers could provide assistance to victims of violence.
- In Burkina Faso, a strong advertising campaign by the Government as well as television and radio programmes on the unhealthy practice of genital mutilation were launched to educate and raise public awareness about the dangerous consequences of such an "operation". A National Anti-Excision Committee was established in 1990 by the present head of State. Today, the practice of genital mutilation has been eliminated in some villages of Burkina Faso. In others, there has been an incredible drop in the number of girls excised: only 10 per cent of the girls are excised compared to 100 per cent 10 years ago.
- Some countries have introduced police units specially trained for dealing with spousal assault. In Brazil, specific police stations have been designated to deal with women's issues, including domestic violence. These police stations are staffed entirely by women .

(<http://www.un.org/rights/dpi1772e.htm>).

Way Forward

(i) **Enactment of Laws prohibiting violence against Women**

There should be a law prohibiting against women violence, so that there will be enough legal ground to prosecute anyone that goes against the law. Notable human rights organizations should champion campaigns aimed at pushing for the enactment of the domestic violence Bill, women trafficking Bill and prostitution Bill into law at the National Assembly. The overall goal of these Bills will be the provision of adequate legal framework for the protection of women from violence at home, women trafficking, other traditional practices and also raise awareness on the problem so as to encourage victims to seek redress under the law.

(ii) **The Activities of Non-governmental Organisations**

There are some non-governmental organizations whose activities help to create awareness on different forms of violence against women and also on measures to empower women. There is this project called women trafficking and child labour eradication foundation (WOTCLEF), a pet project of Chief (Mrs) Titi Abubakar, the wife of the former Vice President of Nigeria. According to her, part of the aim of her project is to enlighten people on the right of women and children, human dignity, dignity of labour, patriotism and responsible citizenship and family values. There is also another non-governmental organizations known as "Project Alert". According to its founder Dr. (Mrs) Effah Chukwuma, the aim of her pet project is to show people the level of violence against women and women's optimum development foundation with the aim of breaking the silence surrounding violence against women, and bringing about an expose of what should be considered as crime against women.

(iii) **Creating more Awareness about Violence Against Women**

More awareness should be created by the government, non-governmental organizations, schools, churches, mosque, individuals about the ills and dangers of women violence in our society. Lectures, workshops, seminars, documentaries on television and radio stations etc are some of the ways to created awareness.

(iv) **Empowerment of Women**

Women should be empowered so that they can fight for their rights. Programmes which will empower women educationally, economically, politically and socially, should be created, so that the women will have access and opportunities of protecting their rights against abuse.

(v) **The Activities of Government**

Government should allow Human Rights Activists to:

- Establish programme of engagement with the government for protection of human rights especially for women, girls and children.
- Implore human rights activist to monitor all the elections conducted in the country especially where women are involved.
- Mandate and support special reporter on violence against women who must do a fact-finding mission and support the efforts of community, grassroots and other organizations living in a culture of fear, survivors of violence and abuse.

- Mandate and support special reporter on Human Rights Defenders who must put in place ways of ensuring safety and protection for women human rights advocates and activists.

Conclusion

The fight aimed at violence against women and its effects in the contemporary social life should be such that must be fought by all stakeholders with the goal of liberating our women from practices that are inimical to their welfare.

In the beginning, God created everybody and made us to be equal before Him. But as time went on, human beings, especially the male folk took it upon themselves to create a world where women will be their subjects by invoking methods such as traditional, social, economic etc as means of downgrading their women folk. Many people are now aware of the danger inherent in some of these practices and as a result, efforts are being intensified at finding a lasting solution or eradication of these practices. The issue of limited reporting of violence by victims should be discouraged. In other words, all cases of violence by victims should be reported to the appropriate quarters and measures should be taken in order to forestall re-occurrence in future. Other part of these efforts at eradicating violence against women may include the enactment of laws guarding violence against women, the participation of non-governmental organization whose interests are aimed at protecting women from violence, the creation of sustained mass awareness campaign against women violence, empowerment of women, involvement of Human Rights Activists to join in the fight of liberating our women from the shackles and status of enslavement. This perception about women should be changed so that some of them who are endowed with great potentials will be allowed to contribute to the growth and development of their family and nation at large.

REFERENCES

- Adewole, O. (2002). An Urgent Rescue Mission in *Tell Magazine*, Lagos: Tell Communication Limited, May 13.
- Andersen, M. L. (2003). *Thinking About Women: Sociological Perspectives on Sex and Gender*. 6th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Andersen, M. L. and Taylor, H. F. (2004). *Sociology: Understanding a Diverse Society*. 3rd ed. USA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, Inc.
- Chang, I. and Kirby, W. C. (1997). *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*. New York: Basic Books.
- Egbutem, K. (2002). Stopping the Butchers. *Insider Weekly*, Lagos: Insider Communication Limited, April 22.
- Encarta Encyclopaedia (2002).

- Giddens, A.; M. Duneier; and R. Appelbaum (2005). *Introduction to Sociology*. 5th ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc.
- Giddens, Anthony (2004). *Sociology*. 4th ed. UK: Polity Press.
- Herman, Dianne (2001). The Rape Culture In John J. Macionis and Nijole, V. Benokraits, eds. *Seeing Ourselves: Classic, Contemporary, and Cross-Cultural Readings in Sociology*. 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Human Rights Watch (1995). The Global Report on Women's Human Rights, www.hrw.org/about/projects/womrep/.
- Macionis, J. J. (2006). *Society: The Basics*. 8th ed. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Nwankwo, J. O. (1997). *Culture and Development*. Enugu: Wisdom Publishers Ltd.
- Otitie, O. and Ogionwo, W. (2006). *An Introduction to Sociological Studies*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Nig. Plc.
- Sawyer, S. (2001). Check-making Slave Trade. *Tell Magazine*. Lagos: Tell Communication Limited, November 26.
- Scroll Nigeria (2010). Women Weep for Jos. Vol. 3, No. 13, March 29.
- Stetz, M. and Oh, B. (2001). *Legacies of the Comfort Women of World War II*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Umahi, H. (2010). Jos Massacre: Litany of Destruction. *Saturday Sun*. Vol. 7, No. 373, March 13.
- Umahi, H. and D. Ugbudian (2010). Jos Massacre. *Saturday Sun*. Vol. 7, No. 373, March 13.
- UNICEF (2001) Children's and Women's Rights in Nigeria: A Wake-up Call. Situation Assessment and Analysis. Abuja: National Planning Commission.
- UNICEF (2001). Children's and Women's Rights in Nigeria: A Wake-up call. Situation Assessment and Analysis. Abuja: National Planning Commission.
- Violence in the Home (2010). (<http://www.phac-aspc.oc.ca/publicat/mh-sm/divorce/2-eng.php>) Retrieved Feb. 27.
- Women and Violence (2010). (<http://www.un.org/rights/dpi1772e.htm>). Retrieved July 11