





According to WHO (2002), about one third of all the women in Nigeria had at one time or the other been a victim of violence in its divers form.

Jekayinka (2010) indicates that domestic violence, female genital mutilations, and forced prostitution are still being practiced among Nigerians in an alarming rate. Cultural practices and beliefs among tribes in Nigeria aggravate the violence and relegate women to second class status. For instance, some tribes in Nigeria, women has no right to inherit her husband's property. Rather widows are humiliated, confined, and restricted in the same position as long as one year, or more all in the name of mourning her beloved late husband.

Murzi (2004) observed that over 60% percent of the children often trafficked across Africa to Europe for sex exploitation are Nigerians. The girl child are often deceived by the syndicates who pretend to help secure jobs for them, but only to transport them to Europe for commercial sex- prostitution.

In Africa, violence is not only widespread; it is also socially acceptable (Stewart, 1995). Odujinrin (1993) has pointed out that in Nigeria, women are often encouraged to stay in abusive relationships because of the cultural beliefs that a woman's place is with her husband and because divorced and separated women are not held in high social regard compared to women who remain in marriage.

Moreover, prevalence studies of intimate partner violence are a new area of research and data on various types of intimate partner violence, other than physical abuse, are generally not available (Krug et al., 2002). The perpetuation of intimate partner violence has continued due to women's economic dependence on men, patriarchy and the differential socialization process women pass through (Heise et al., 1994; Mhloyi, 1996; Kurz, 1989).

Olagbegi and Afolabi (2010) assert that Nigerian women are underrepresented in the political arena, in public or private sectors, which lower their status in the society; hence political marginalization of women promotes gender based violence against women.

All these acts of violence against women cut across cultures, and traditions irrespective of the norms. Those that are aware of the scourge are afraid of the stigma; consequently, tolerate violence while suffering in silence until the manifesting depression, low self esteem, and attendant health challenges.

In a study carried out by Obi and Ozumba, (2007) on the factors associated with domestic violence, in South East, Nigeria; 70% of respondents reported abuse in their family with 92% of the victims being female partners and the remaining 8% being male. The common forms of abuse reported were shouting at a partner (93%), slapping or pushing (77%) and punching and kicking (40%) (AfrolNews, 2007). Also, in a study of Igbo communities in Nigeria, 58.9% of women reported battery during pregnancy while 21.3% have been forced to have sexual intercourse (Okemgbo et al., 2002). It is however disturbing to note that many women do not know if they had been abused or not. This could be due to the acceptance of some abusive behavior as 'normal'. Oyediran and Isugo (2005), in a study of women's perception of wife-beating in Nigeria, found that 64.4 and 50.4% of ever married and unmarried women, respectively, expressed consent for wife beating. Reports in the print and electronic media reveal vicious attacks on women by intimate partners in different forms such as acid bath, rape, beatings, some of which sometimes result in the death of the victim. However, many victims do not report to the law enforcement agents for fear of reprisal from abusers or the belief that the police and the judicial system cannot help. The police are also reported to frequently dismiss complaints of domestic violence as a 'private matter'. Consequently, the cases of violence against women mostly go unreported because the victims prefer to suffer in silence (Adebayo and Kolawole, 2013).

### **III. Theoretical Framework**

Discussions on sociological implication of gender based violence against women require some level of theoretical explanations which have been established among scholars in the field of Sociology. This is necessary for more in-depth explanation and understanding of the study. The feminist theory is the ideal theory for this explanation.

### **IV. Feminist Theory:**

Feminist theory is one of the major contemporary sociological theories, which analyzes the status of women and men in society with the purpose of using that knowledge to better women's lives. Feminist theorists also question the differences between women, including how race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, and age intersect with gender. Contemporary sociologist Patricia Hill Collins is known throughout the field for developing, deploying, and popularizing the concept of inter-sectionality in her theory and research.

Feminist theory is most concerned with giving a voice to women and highlighting the various ways women have contributed to society. There are four main types of feminist theory that attempt to explain the societal differences between men and women, but the gender inequality, gender oppression and structural oppression are peculiar to this study and were used to analyze the study.

The gender difference perspective examines how women's location in, and experience of, social situations differ from men's. For example, cultural feminists look to the different values associated with

womanhood and femininity as a reason why men and women experience the social world differently. Other feminist theorists believe that the different roles assigned to women and men within institutions better explain gender difference, including the sexual division of labor in the household. Existential and phenomenological feminists focus on how women have been marginalized and defined as the “other” in patriarchal societies. Women are thus seen as objects and are denied the opportunity for self-realization.

#### **Gender Inequality:**

Gender-inequality theories recognize that women's location in, and experience of, social situations are not only different but also unequal to men's. Liberal feminists argue that women have the same capacity as men for moral reasoning and agency, but that patriarchy, particularly the sexist patterning of the division of labor, has historically denied women the opportunity to express and practice this reasoning. Women have been isolated to the private sphere of the household and, thus, left without a voice in the public sphere. Even after women enter the public sphere, they are still expected to manage the private sphere and take care of household duties and child rearing. Liberal feminists point out that marriage is a site of gender inequality and that women do not benefit from being married as men do. Indeed, married women have higher levels of stress than unmarried women and married men. According to liberal feminists, the sexual division of labor in both the public and private spheres needs to be altered in order for women to achieve equality.

#### **Gender Oppression:**

Theories of gender oppression go further than theories of gender difference and gender inequality by arguing that not only are women different from or unequal to men, but that they are actively oppressed, subordinated, and even abused by men. Power is the key variable in the two main theories of gender oppression: psychoanalytic feminism and radical feminism. Psychoanalytic feminists attempt to explain power relations between men and women by reformulating Freud's theories of the subconscious and unconscious, human emotions, and childhood development. They feel that conscious calculation cannot fully explain the production and reproduction of patriarchy. Radical feminists argue that being a woman is a positive thing in and of it, but that this is not acknowledged in patriarchal societies where women are oppressed. They identify physical violence as being at the base of patriarchy, but they think that patriarchy can be defeated if women recognize their own value and strength, establish a sisterhood of trust with other women, confront oppression critically, and form female separatist networks in the private and public spheres.

#### **Structural Oppression:**

Structural oppression theories posit that women's oppression and inequality are a result of capitalism, patriarchy, and racism. Socialist feminists agree with Karl Marx and Frederic Engels that the working class is exploited as a consequence of the capitalist mode of production, but they seek to extend this exploitation not just to class but also to gender. Intersectionality theorists seek to explain oppression and inequality across a variety of variables, including class, gender, race, ethnicity, and age. They make the important insight that not all women experience oppression in the same way. White women and black women, for example, face different forms of discrimination in the workplace. Thus, different groups of women come to view the world through a shared standpoint of "heterogeneous commonality."

Source: <http://www.amazoncastle.com/feminism/ecocult.shtml>.

Accessed: April 28, 2004.

### **V. Factors That Advance Gender Based Violence In Nigeria**

Early history showed that the relegation of women to the second class status dates back to several centuries ago and the human society has been a male dominated one. The Arabian society for instance, regards the birth of a female child as a shame, disgrace and treats them as such. While on the other hands, the birth of a male child is welcomed with jublations, and celebrations in other societies. These cradled on the bed clothed in robes are given jades scepter as toys. In Nigeria, especially the south geo-political, the birth of a male child excites members of the family than a female child. Therefore, gender based violence results from biological differentiation of sexes.

#### **Stereotypical Roles**

Females are biologically and physically perceived as the weaker sex who requires considerable protection by men. As the girl child passes through the stages of development, she is bewildered. Gender based violence has been a serious problem in most societies throughout history. Women in Nigeria like their counterparts in other parts of the world, suffer gender based violence irrespective of age, class religion or social status (Hamm, 2000).

Njenga, (1999), opined that the cause is the image created by the society which portrays a man to be viewed as being strong, educated, creative, and clever while a woman is the opposite of all these traits. The way parents bring up their children, which create disparity between boys and girls, also is a source of gender-based violence in later life. When a boy grows up, knowing that he is not supposed to wash his own clothes, cook or help in the house, if he grows up and gets married to a woman who comes from a home where duties are equally shared between girls and boys, this can create tension that might lead to violence.

Udegbe (1995) opined that in the rural areas, gender-based violence is perpetrated where that relationship between men and women is that of senior-junior. This is also in line with the studies of Ezech and Gage (1998), Morrow, (1986) states that at the societal level, the discrimination against women is traceable to make authority and decision making in the home rigid gender roles, definition of masculinity that are linked to dominance or male honor, economic inequality between men and women, and the use of physical force for conflict resolution.

According to Adewale (2007), although wife beating is a worldwide phenomenon, it is accepted as part of our culture. This is reinforced by the concept of sex role socialization of women, which encourages and emphasizes submissiveness, and divorce is not always viable alternative due to stigma attached to it. Adewale's result was supported by Loi et. al (1999) that domestic violence exists because of the deep rooted attitudes regarding socially and culturally prescribed roles, responsibilities and traits of men and women. For instance, wife must show respect or reference to all male members of consanguine (relationship by blood) family irrespective of their age.

Akande (1993) observed that the clause that the Nigeria laws allow husbands to reasonably chastise their wives. Religious teaching did not promote gender based violence against women. This peculiar violence of that stage and as the girl child grows older the discrimination against her increases.

### **Physical Powers**

Another cause of gender based violence against women in Nigeria is the belief that boys are stronger than girls and so are trained to accept more strenuous tasks like hunting, shooting with bows and arrows, farming and fighting back enemies that are about to out-run their communities.

On the other hand, girl child are stereotyped to perform simpler tasks like sweeping the rooms, scrubbing the walls and collecting firewood to cook for the family so that they can become good wives and mothers in future. Additionally, women in Nigeria are excluded from rigorous traditional activities like tree climbing (e.g. climbing palm tree) or other traditional sports like wrestling, canoeing, and horse-back riding which were exclusively made for men. Women were reserved with lighter recreational activities and as well allowed to watch the men and cheer them up. This cultural unequal power led to domination, violence, and discrimination against women by men; consequently prevent women's full advancement. Other causes of gender based violence are as follows:

### **Financial Insecurity**

Financial dependence according to Njenga, (1999) is a cause of gender based violence against women in Nigeria. In his statement, "if a man cannot establish his authority economically over his family members, he would tend to do so physically." In a situation where a man is unable to provide the financial needs of his family, it means he has failed in his responsibility; thereby would not like to be seen as a failure. Also total dependencies on a man most times lead to frustration and this expresses it through the use of violence.

### **Poverty**

Cause of gender based violence against women is poverty. Ndungu, (2004) opined that the reproductive and productive roles of women often place them at the bottom of the reproductive and productive roles of women often place them at the bottom of the ladder. Women are mostly found in low paid jobs, which rob them of power to participate in decision making, within the political, socio-economic, and cultural sphere of life. In some parts of Nigeria, it is known that the input of the girl child into the family income is so high that it becomes economically unwise to allow such a child to go to school, especially in the northern parts of Nigeria. Women are engaged in generating income by hawking food items, helping with household chores and looking after the younger ones or even working as house helps to wealthier families to ease the financial burden on their own family.

### **Childlessness**

Some men beat their wife at a slightest provocation for they have not had any issue-child. They verbally abuse women by calling them childless and threatening to return the woman to their parents. Because men are not at peace with their wives not bearing a child as expected, they abuse them at all times. Equally women with only female children are abused by their husbands in some society, this is because much

importance is usually attached to male children, and therefore women who find themselves in this condition do not enjoy peace in their matrimonial homes. Childlessness has also been found to be associated with a significant higher risk of intimate partner violence (Koenig et al., 2006).

The causes of frequent birth of female children are not theirs, but most men both literate and illiterate live negatively with their spouses as if they are the responsible for those happenings (Mendie, 2009; Okon, 2009; In Akpan, 2011).

### **Unemployment**

Most men who lose their jobs and are unable to get another to cope with the harsh socio-economic changes tend to push many men into alcoholism as well as drug addiction. When some men are drunk, they tend to lose self-control, hence lead to aggression (Mendie, 2009).

### **Environmental Factor**

Njenga, (1999) posited that one of the causes of gender based violence is the surrounding influences. According to him, the more crowded people are in place, the more violence likely to experience. He concluded that poverty, which also determines where and how a person lives is a contributing factor in violence against women. Also dwindled love relationship, nagging on the part of the women, infidelity, and impotency of the man all contribute to gender based violence.

### **Effects of Gender Based Violence**

The effects of Gender-based violence can be devastating. They pose danger to a woman's reproductive health and can scar a survivor psychologically, cognitively and interpersonally. A woman who experiences violence and lives in an abusive relationship with her partner may be forced to become pregnant or have an abortion against her will, or her partner may knowingly expose her to a sexually transmitted infection.

Bitangaro,(1999) reported what a child psychologist says that "violence absolutely impacts on children..." A girl child who has undergone or witnessed violence may become withdrawn, anxious, or depressed on one hand; on the other hand, the child may become aggressive and exert control over younger siblings.

Male children usually carry out the aggressive form of behavior and as adults, may beat-their spouses. The effects of sexual abuse are the exploitation of power. Young people are especially at risk and this can have lasting consequences for their sexual and productive health. The costs can include unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STI), physical injury, and trauma.

Bitangaro (1999) reported that in Uganda as in many parts of the world, a lot of stigma is attached to a woman who has been raped. The effects of female Genital cutting (FGC) are many. According to the report of women vision in Uganda (1998) the surgeons, who performed the cutting are old women. These women according to the report claim that they have ancestral powers. Female genital cutting can be seen as an impediment to a girl's sexual enjoyment. The girls according to the report of women vision (1998) are known to experience intense pain, bleeding, painful abdominal menstruation, infection, and psychological trauma.

The Population Reference Bureau (2000) reported the World Bank as saying that gender-based violence is heavy a health burden for women of ages 15-is as that posed by HIV, tuberculosis and infection during child birth, cancer and heart diseases. The fourth world conference on women has adopted a platform for action, which declares that "violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objective of equality, development, and peace."

Gender based violence against women is a problem that limits girl child education, causes poor enrolment and attendants in primary and secondary schools. The girl children continue to face many obstacles that impede their part to learning. In some parts of Nigeria it is believed that enrolling girls for formal education is a waste of time and resources, as she would be married off sooner or later. In other to buttress this belief, cultural aspects like forced marriage, inheritance law, sexual harassment, unintended pregnancy, and domestic responsibilities tend to conflicts with enrolment and attendance of girls in schools.

Statistics has it that the enrolment percentages of the boy child are consistently higher than that of the girl child, and out of the number that enroll in primary schools in Nigeria only 43% enter secondary schools ( UNICEF, 2013).

Gender based violence has serious impact on the mental health of the girl child which consequently affects her performance in school. WHO, (2010) explained that abused girls are more likely to suffer depression, anxiety, psychosomatics symptoms. It further pointed out that violence against the girl child affect their ability to learn or even the willingness to take part in school activities; thus exposing them to serious dangers.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Gender based violence against women has been an age long problem world over which has to be looked into. Gender based violence is an obstacle to peace, progress and a threat to the objective of equality of men. This violence appears as tradition, customs, social order, and religious practices that exist to lower the status accorded to women in our society. The implications are most likely to impair the girl child inability to meet with Education for All (EFA) in 2015 set out to achieve by the millennium Development Goals (MDGS).

In consequence therefore, should totally be checked by all the agencies concerned. Also states should condemn any iota of violence against women and make laws that would protect and prevent acts of violence against women in our society.

## **VII. Recommendations:**

Gender based violence is an acts of discrimination against women in our society. Historically, unequal power relations between men and women lead to perpetual domination of men over women who manifest into forced subordinating position compared with men.

Therefore, the following recommendations have been proffered:

1. Government should refrain from invoking any tradition or religious considerations as stated out in the declaration of UN General Assembly act on elimination of violence against women.
2. Government must ensure that women are considered in the scheme of things in the allocation of office positions.
3. Government should ensure that policy and programs are formulated aimed at eliminating gender based violence in Nigeria.
4. There should be compulsory education of girl child in our society instead of enforcing them to marry.
5. Non-governmental Organization, (NGOs) should effectively campaign through the media programs on the awareness of violence eradication.
6. Penal laws with administrative sanctions in the legislations should be reinforced.
7. Any act of violence against women in our society should be condemned entirely. Therefore Nigeria is called upon to be part and parcel of the global trend towards equality. We should demonstrate more sensitivity towards the plight of Nigerian women by implementing all the recommendations in this paper.
8. All stakeholders in the Nigerian society ranging from government, religious bodies, civil society groups, community leaders must embark on vigorous creation of awareness and education on the negative implications of gender based violence and growth development of women in the society.
9. There is need to facilitate a training program for the legislators both at national and state assembly, the judiciary, the police, and other government agencies to help enact relevant laws which will eradicate gender based violence in Nigeria. This will go a long ways put an end in treating issues of gender based violence as trivial family issues, but as an issue of serious national concern.
10. Empowerment of women both economic and education wise to lessen the vulnerability of violence. All statutory religious and customary laws where it exist which promote gender based violence against women should be abolished, on the other hands, perpetrators of it must be severely punished to serve as deterrence to others who may nurse such tendency.

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