

# GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

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## **Abstract**

*Gender-based violence is on physical/mental health, and can result in isolation, sadness, and attempts at suicide. Domestic violence against women is an international problem that cuts beyond borders of nation, culture, and class. This study highlights its causes and analyzes the many forms of violence. It discusses indicators violence in Nigeria as well as its destructive effects on both the victim and society at large. To lower the number of incidences of gender-centered violence in Nigeria, counseling interventions for both victims and offenders were emphasised. One of the recommendations was for the government to occasionally host seminars and workshops on gender-based violence.*

**Keywords:** Gender based, violence, counselling, warning signs, abuse

## **Introduction**

Gender-based violence (GBV), refers to an harmful act of abuse which leads to mental or physical harm to women. Any act of gender-based violence against a woman that results in or is likely to result in bodily, sexual, mental, or emotional harm to her, as well as threats of such actions, coercion, or the arbitrary deprivation of her liberty, whether it occurs in public or private life, is considered to be violence against women (WHO 2019). Worldwide, domestic violence happens.

According to (UNICEF, 2005). Violence against female is inequality between male and female brought about domination against female by male. No country is free from such violence. The only variation is in the type that occur in different societies. (United Nations 1989). It can be any acts or threats that target women specifically in order to cause them physical, sexual, or psychological harm and that either disproportionately or exclusively affect women. When discussing gender center violence, do not referred to violence against female only but all acts of violence against a person or group of people that are disproportionately impacted by sex.

Humans have been exposed to a wide range of abuse in the media, but it is well known that women experience a variety of forms of violence, primarily at the hands of men. Abuse is a global pandemic that affects all racial and ethnic groups, all age groups, and all facets of society. It is not exclusive to

any one continent, region, or tribe. In 2018, Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) found 31% population of females aged 15 to 49 had experienced some type of physical violence, and 9% had experienced sexual abuse at least once in their lifetime.

Gender-based violence is a social issue that continues to afflict the society. These behaviors occur frequently but not frequently reported. For instance, according to UNODC (2018), intimate partner violence killed more than two-thirds of all women in Africa.

### **Concept of Gender-Based Violence**

According to Santrock (2001), gender relates to the sociological aspect of being male or female. The study of gender, however, is really about the push and pull of consequences caused by the gender interaction between the masculine and feminine being in a given culture at a given period.(Ani 2012).Contrary to what many scholars believe, gender, in the words of Ewumi (2012), refers to how one perceives oneself as well as how society and culture see one as being male or female.

In research and conversation, gender issues are a central focus everywhere in the world, including Nigeria. Gender equality is a crucial topic, particularly for academics and policymakers. The position of male and female in many parts of life is a concern for intellectuals (Osarenren et al. 2018). Violence committed against a person on the grounds of their gender is referred to as gender-based violence.

According to statistical data, 14.1% of men and 29.3% of women between the ages of 16 and middle adulthood have experienced some type of gender-based violence (3.3 million men and 7.1 million women; Brooks Obe, 2023); this estimate indicates that in every 3 cases of gender-based violence, one will be committed by a man and two by a woman.

The goal of gender-based violence is to make a person to be submissive and have inferiority complex. This is based on a power imbalance. The norms and beliefs that control society's social and cultural institutions, particularly those that champion the superiority of the male gender over the female gender and hence make women targets of abuse, are firmly ingrained in this type of violence. Gender-based violence can take any form, including sexual, physical/verbal, emotional, etc.

### **Types of Gender-Based violence**

Physical aggression which includes battering, isolating, monitoring and sexual abuse (forced sexual contact, and humiliation) are the three categories into which gender based violence can be divided.

Johnson (2000) listed the following types of violence:

1. **Physical Abuse:** According to Ogunkorde (2018), this is the most common type of abuse. It is physical abuse when there is contact that is meant to intimidate, hurt, or otherwise physically harm the victim. This includes hitting, punching, and pushing. Additionally, it might refer to actions like depriving the victim of critical medical attention, robbing her of sleep or other essential life functions, or forcing her to consume drugs or alcohol against her choice.
2. **Sexual abuse** is any circumstance in which a female participant is forced into engaging in sexual behavior. Spousal rape, or forced sex, is a form of hostility and violence committed by

a spouse. It involves using physical force to force someone to do a sexual act against their consent.

3. Emotional abuse includes degrading the person involved privately or publicly making him/her feel inferior and depriving the victim of the basic needs such as also known as psychological abuse or mental abuse, includes degrading the victim in public or in private making the victim feel inferior or embarrassed. Also depriving the victim of basic needs such as food and shelter.
4. Verbal Abuse: This is a type of emotional abuse that involves the use of language. There are less overtly aggressive kinds of verbal abuse as well as aggressive behaviors including name-calling, blaming, disdain, and criticism. On the surface, seemingly innocent statements can be used to defame, falsely accuse, or influence people to engage in negative acts which makes them feel unloved, to endanger people financial security. Khan, P. and Khan, W. (2015)
5. Economic Abuse: When the husband has control over his wife's access to financial resources, this is referred to as economic abuse. The victim of economic abuse may be denied access to resources, have their access to resources restricted, or have their economic resources exploited. The goal of stopping a woman from possessing resources is to reduce the woman's ability to cater for herself and to make her financially dependent on people. This may be obstructing her efforts to earn a degree, land a job, advance in her job and accumulate wealth. The perpetrator may provide the woman allowances watch over how the money is spent, or borrow money from the victim without permission. Or completely deplete the victim's financial resources to limit the victim's access to resources. Victim's access to resources. Postmus, Prumer, & McMahon (2012)
6. Spiritual Abuse: When someone hurts someone or tries to manipulate you, they are engaging in spiritual or religious abuse. It can entail stopping the woman from following her spiritual beliefs, using one's religion to control one's wife is one example of this, as is forbidding the woman from indulging in her spiritual or religious Rituals.

### **Rates of Gender-Based Violence in Some Countries and in Nigeria**

Across board, one in three women have been the victim of abuse, which includes coercive sex, physical assault, verbal abuse, and beatings. Most of the time, the abuser is someone the victim knows. Sometimes by her husband, a male family member, friends, or coworkers (Eghanevba et al., 2013) Djaden and Theones (2002) reported that each year in the United States of America, females experience about 4.8 million physical assaults and rapes related to intimate partners, while males experience about 2.9 million such assaults. For instance 56% of Indian woman surveyed by an agency justified wife beating by giving flimsy excuses. (Basu and Pratishthan, 2002)

According to Amnesty International (2007), a third and sometimes even two-thirds of women are thought to have experienced physical, sexual, and psychological abuse at the hands of their husbands, partners, or fathers. The shocking underreporting of these harmful practices due to ethnic issues is even more pitiful (UN Women 2022).

Gender-based violence occurs frequently. In a research on the causes of domestic violence by Obi and Ozumba, 2007, 70% of respondents said they had experienced abuse at home, Screaming at a partner (93%) sleeping or pushing (77%) and punching and kicking (40%) were the most common

kinds of abuse reported by women.

Similar accounts in the broadcasting industry disclose gender-based violence attacks that includes rape, assault e t c. However, many victims do not come forward because they are afraid of revenge. The following were listed as the reasons of gender-based violence by Adebayo and Kolawole (2012):

### **Causes of Gender-Based Violence**

1. Cultural and sociological aspects According to some traditional beliefs, men in Nigeria are considered to be the heads of their homes and have complete authority over all household decisions. Second, the custom of paying a bride price has contributed to the notion that women are property, with the exchange of the bride price serving as proof of a business deal. As a result, gender-based violence is a powerful tool for supporting masculine dominance and control. Gender-based violence has historically been associated with existing gender disparities between men and women in regard to gender norms, which are societal standards of acceptable behavior for boys and girls. In 2005, Onyenebo.
2. The impact of unemployment: According to Catalano, Lind Rosenblat, and Novaco (2003), gender-based violence occurs more frequently when people are unemployed. They discovered that hypothetically, unemployed people experience anger and frustration. This is especially true if the partner's male is unemployed. Contrarily, many victims of poverty among males suffer out of fear of losing their husbands' financial assistance.
3. Mental Illness: Psychological problems such borderline personality disorder, drug misuse, and alcoholism are occasionally linked to gender-based violence. According to estimates, at least one-third of all abusers suffer from a mental disorder.
4. Financial Uncertainty: Another factor contributing to gender-based violence. Nigeria (1999) observed that a man will typically assert his dominance physically if he was unable to do so academically or monetarily.
5. Ethnic factors: The acceptance and persistence of violence against women are based on how different ethnic groups view the issue. Gender-based violence has historically been associated with discrepancies between male and female in terms of societal expectations for boys' and girls' suitable roles and behavior. Gender-based violence so thrives as a means of encouraging male superiority and control, according to Onyenebo (2005). The subordination of Nigerian women to their husbands and the males in their own families, as well as to her husband's extended family, increases the value of the men and encourages their dominance over women.
6. Religion: The majority of Nigerian religions support that the man is the family's head and have more power and influence. Religion teaches that in married partnerships, women are the weaker vessel and take a backseat.
7. Drug and alcohol addiction: Men who are addicted to drugs or alcohol are more likely to hit their spouses. After abusing alcohol or other substances to excess, the husbands descend and assault the wife, inflicting various degrees of injury or, in some cases, fatalities.
8. Low level of education: Women who are illiterate are likely to be abused than those who are literates because they have fewer options for education and advancement in their communities.

### Effects of Gender-Centered Violence

The following are impacts of gender-centered violence listed by Quinn Wanjiru in 2021.

1. Physical effect: According to Jones (1997), Examples of gender based consequences includes head injury, fracture and internal bleeding. As a result, medical attention which includes hospitalization is involved. These Pregnant victims are more likely to have miscarriage, preterm labor, and injuries or deaths to the fetus (Barnet, 2001).
2. Psychological impact: Victims endure long-term anxiety and terror. It is stated that 60% of victims match the criteria for depression, whether during or after the relationship's termination.
3. Financial Consequences: As a result of economic abuse, the victim usually has no money. This is a difficult problem for victims as well as the most significant one that can dissuade them from fleeing their abusers.
4. Effect over time: Victims of gender-based violence have psychological and mental health difficulties and ongoing physical health issues which are two of the main effects of gender-based violence.
5. Children: Since they are frequently the victims of gender-based violence, it can be tremendously unpleasant for a child. Parental or other children may become the targets of the fury. They could become combative and disruptive both at home and in the school. This may also affect their academic performance, and sometimes it can lead to self-isolation or keeping away from others. The effect of substance use among children and adolescents students may results to poor academic achievement, stealing, vandalism, truancy and risky sexual behaviour, etc( Odojin and Igabari, 2023).
6. Self-esteem: Victims frequently lack self-esteem and find it challenging to put their trust in other people. Victims' rage and stress may cause depression and other emotional illnesses that result in suicide (CDC, 2006).

### Warning signs of Gender Based Violence

According to our definition, physical and sexual abuse constitute gender-based violence. There are abusive behaviors, nevertheless. CHELD (2014), a center for child health ethics law and development. Emotional/psychological abuse, verbal abuse, controlling conduct, physical and financial neglect, intense jealousy, physical aggression, and sexual assault are all warning indicators of gender-based violence.

The abused person has a few options for possible actions. It depends on the circumstances what to do. The following actions are suggested for someone who has been abused:

1. The first stop for any injuries or illnesses brought on by violence should be hospitals and clinics.
2. Seek for a sympathetic person, such as your mother, sister, aunt, or grandma.
3. When accessible, visit counseling services run by the government's social welfare department or those in your school or place of employment.
4. Inform your abuser that you have reported him or her, spoken to others about them, or that you plan to take legal action against them.
5. You have the option of calling the police to report the incident.
6. You have the option to leave and take the kids.
7. You may get a divorce on the grounds of repeated abuse.

8. Seek redress in court.

### **Counselling Implication**

The communities, religious institutions, and all tiers of government must be involved in eradicating gender center violence. There should be seminars or workshops where certified counselors might help spread the gender-based violence campaign. As a form of applied psychology, counseling uses a psychological process to assist people in coping with a variety of life circumstances, such as gender-based violence and stable families.

The school counsellor may conduct counselling sessions for various grades for the benefit of a society that is free from violence. For the various age groups and grades, the school counselor might organize counselling sessions on the benefit of a society that is free from violence. Religious organizations should organize seminars as efforts to enlighten the public on violence free society. These programs should teach the various anger management techniques to individual's students with anger problems. Young couples preparing for marriage should receive instruction on how to avoid violence.

Therapists should check every client for gender-based violence due to the scope and prevalence of this issue. The victim should be offered safety tips, such as to stay away from confrontations in rooms with just one exit and to stay away from places with lots of possible weapons, including the kitchen and the bathroom. This is because safety planning enables the victim to prepare for potentially risky circumstances and is successful independent of the victim's decision to remain with the offender.

Since gender-based violence may be motivated by issues with control and power, treating offenders through anger management alone may not be successful in addressing these issues. It is advised that offenders receive treatment that includes anger management. Accountability-based education programs should cover subjects like identifying the behavioral patterns of abusers and maintaining effective communication skills.

### **Conclusion**

In this study, a theoretical report on the issue of gender centered violence has been offered. Only if all parties involved act in accordance with their responsibilities will the menace of gender based violence be overcome.

### **Recommendations**

The following suggestions were made in light of the literature review:

1. All forms of violence against female should be considered crimes that are subject to legal sanctions by the government.
2. To help victims of abuse rebuild their self-esteem and achieve their life goals, professional counselors should provide trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TFCBT) more recognition.
3. In our society, education for girls should be required.
4. The government should occasionally host seminars and workshops on gender-based violence.



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