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**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA**

Domestic violence in Nigeria is a problem as in many parts of Africa. There is a deep cultural belief in Nigeria that it is socially acceptable to hit a woman to discipline a spouse. Domestic violence is widespread and shows no signs of lessening in Nigeria.

Domestic violence takes many forms including physical, sexual, emotional, and mental. Traditionally, domestic violence is committed against females. Common forms of violence against women in Nigeria are rape, acid attacks, molestation, wife beating, and corporal punishment.

Domestic violence take form in different ways:

Physical violence

Women often face physical violence at the hands of their family members. The most common forms of physical violence include rape, murder, slapping, and kicking. Some of the reasons that were given for physical abuse include their husbands being drunk, financial issues, and the rejection of a partner's sexual advance.

Relationship inequality is also a strong indicator of physical violence. High levels of wife beating occur when the woman is making more money than her husband or partner is. This has been attributed to the lack of control the male partner feels within the relationship.

Women also often link the perpetration of physical violence with husbands who are very controlling. Women who justify wife beating are more likely to be victims of physical violence.

Another form of violence which has received a lot of recent attention in Nigeria is acid baths. Acid baths are actions of violence where the perpetrator throws acid onto his or her victim's body, resulting in disfigurement and possible loss of eyesight. Acid baths are a large issue for women that needs to be addressed. In 1990, a former beauty queen rejected her boyfriend's attempts to rekindle their relationship. In retaliation, he threw acid in her face with the words "let me see how any man will love you now".

Sexual violence

Sexual violence in Nigeria largely goes unreported because of the burden of proof necessary for conviction as well as the social stigma it brings. Nigerian police have not been seen to arrest for sexual assault resulting in less reporting of the act.

About 25% of women reported forced sex at the hands of either their current partner or a former partner.

Furthermore, the 2008 Demographic and Health Survey showed that over 30.5% of married women have experienced at least one or more forms of physical, emotional or sexual violence in their marriage.

Influencing factors

The social context of violence in Nigeria is based largely on its patriarchal society. Violence against a wife is seen as a tool that a husband uses to chastise his wife and to improve her. The common loss of women's rights upon marriage in Sub-Saharan Africa and the implicit obedience and deference towards men is socially encouraged within their society.

The Yoruba women refer to their husbands as “olowo ori mi” meaning "the one who paid my bride price". In effect, marriage gives up a woman's right to herself. In practices where a bride price is paid, it is common for the husband to believe that by paying the bride price, he now owns his wife.The act of marriage is seen to give the husband full ownership of the woman. She surrenders her right to her body to him.

Other factors linked with domestic violence are lower socioeconomic classes, substance abuse, couple age disparity, and unemployment.

Another cause of domestic violence is infertility. When looking at a study taken by infertile woman visiting a fertility clinic, many women reported some form of domestic violence- whether physical, mental, or emotional. There were also trends showing that the Yoruba tribe women were more likely to experience violence in this case.

Some perceptions on domestic violence:

The perceptions of domestic violence vary based on region, religion, and class. For example, the Tiv view wife beating as a “sign of love” that should be encouraged as evidenced with the statement, "If you are not yet beaten by your husband then you do not know the joy of marriage and that means you are not yet married".

All the major ethnic groups in Nigeria- Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa- have strong patriarchial societal structures that lead to the justification of domestic violence. However, the Hausa are more supportive of domestic violence and viewing it as an inherent right of a husband.

There are differences in the perceptions of domestic violence varying across reasons. There are higher numbers for instances like neglecting the children or going out without telling the husband and less for refusal of sex or a mere argument. Many of the reasons that are viewed as acceptable for domestic violence are largely subjective to a husband's interpretation. For example, common acceptable beatings among men are lack of respect for husband, stubbornness, imposition of will on husband, and failure of wifely duties.

The 2008 NDHS did a study to view the acceptability of wife beating in Nigeria. They put forward five scenarios and asked both men and women. With women, there were trends found in viewing wife beating as more acceptable. It was viewed as more acceptable in rural areas, among married versus unmarried women, uneducated women, and poor women. The reason most viewed as justified for beating was going out without telling the husband. The relationships were about the same for men.

While domestic violence is a violation of fundamental human rights, which the Nigerian Constitution is against, there are still provisions that make it legal to engage in domestic violence against women. The provision of the Penal Code applicable in the Northern part of Nigeria specifically encourages violence against women. Underneath its provisions, the beating of a wife for the purpose of correction is legal by use of (Section 55 (1) (d) of the Penal Code).

Nigeria ratified the convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 1985 but international treaties can only go into effect when Parliament has put in a corresponding domestic law thereby limiting the international treaty to disuse.

Rape is criminalized and under the law, the sentence can range from 10 years to life.

Amnesty International criticized Nigeria's judicial system due to its conviction rate of 10 percent of rape prosecutions.

In an attempt to battle the issue of police discretion and inactivity, Lagos (big city in Nigeria), held a two-day sensitization workshop on Domestic Violence law as it applied in the state.

In May 2013, Nigeria's National Assembly passed a bill to reduce gender-based violence, which is awaiting Senate approval before it becomes law. The Violence against Persons Bill gave harsher punishments for sexual violence and also provided support and measures such as restraining order to prevent the continuation of abuse.

When cases do make it to court, they are usually stagnant. In 2010, the traditional king of Akure physical and bloodily assaulted one of his wives resulting in her death. At the urging of the public, the police made a statement that they would press charges.The case was dismissed in 2012.