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**Topic: domestic violence**

**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. The CLEEN Foundation reports 1 in every 3 respondents admitting to being a victim of domestic violence. The survey also found a nationwide increase in domestic violence in the past 3 years from 21% in 2011 to 30% in 2013. A CLEEN Foundation's 2012 National Crime and Safety Survey demonstrated that 31% of the national sample confessed to being victims of domestic violence.

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.

The Nigerian government has taken legal proceedings to prosecute men who abuse women in several states. There is currently a push in Nigeria for federal laws concerning domestic violence and for a stronger national response and support for domestic violence issues.

## 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 advances.

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.

Responses

Women experiencing domestic violence have varying responses and differences in who they report their abuse to. In a study done in Ilorin, Nigeria, a large number of women reported their abuse to family and friends while not many decided to go to the police to file a report. The rationale behind not going to the police is various such as the fear of victim-blaming, acceptance of violence as proper reaction, and the lack of police action.

One major issue facing the domestic violence issues in Nigeria are the tendency for low reported rates. A study looking at domestic violence in southwest Nigeria found that only 18.6% reported experienced or acted violence between themselves and their spouse. However, the same study also shows that 60% of the respondents claimed to have witnessed violence between a separate couple. These statistics show that there may be a tendency for underreporting which can occur for various reasons.

One main reason for the high levels of under-reporting are that it is seen as taboo to involve the police in family matters. They view the separation of the two as important and the police force ascribes to this notion as well. Police hesitate to intervene even with lodged complaints unless the abuse goes over the customary amount usually seen in the region.

## Laws

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. There are also fines of about 1,280 dollars.

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.

## Organizations

Nigeria has some non profit organizations and non governmental organizations that attempt to provide support for victims of domestic violence.

The Women and Child Watch Initiative is a nonprofit providing support to women and children who are victims of domestic trials such as violence and forced marriages. They also organize training programs for female lawyers to defend women's rights in domestic violence in court. The “Unite to End Violence against Women” campaign was initiated alongside the declaration of “16 days of activism against violence against women”. This campaign was especially important in Nigeria when calling attention to the issue of brutality against women In 1985, Nigeria validated the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, otherwise known as the CEDAW. The organization works with the sole purpose of abolishing discrimination against women.