

**Prevention of gender-based violence beyond the COVID-19 pandemic in South-West, Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

*Gender-based violence from time immemorial has been with the inhabitants of the South-West, Nigeria. It has become a cultural transition phenomenon. Gender-based violence can be described as violence directed against women because they are women or that disproportionately affecting women. COVID-19 pandemic worsens the occurrence of gender-based violence. Lockdown provided opportunities for perpetrators of gender-based violence to attacked women and young girls. Men were at home most times. Offices were lockdown. Movements were restricted. Women lost their jobs, and they became prey to their husbands and outsiders. COVID-19 pandemic presented key challenges in displacement contexts with increased gender-based violence, in addition to and resulting from loss of income and household stress; as well as barriers to help-seeking options for survivors. Gender-based violence is both biological and cultural learning attitude. Cultural Transmission Theory (CT) as a theoretical explanation of the prevalence of gender-based violence in South-West, Nigeria. This paper, therefore, identifies stakeholders on the prevention of gender-based violence such as the government, survivors, development partners, and non-governmental organizations. In this paper, the following prevention mechanisms were suggested such as prompt arrest and prosecution of gender-based offenders, scholarship, and stipends for women and young girls.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19, gender, violence, stakeholders, domestic, culture,

**Introduction**

Gender-based violence is not a new social phenomenon, but its magnitude is alarming. Gender-based violence has become a common feature of interpersonal relationship between men and women. It has socio-cultural and



legal dimensions. Gender-based violence is considered violence directed against women because they are women or that disproportionately affects Women. Women are beaten, “punished”, forcibly raped, and, even, murdered by intimate partners on a daily basis<sup>1</sup>

There are patriarchy, matriarchy, and egalitarian culture of gender relationship. Nigeria, to some extent is largely a patriarchy society. In recent time, egalitarian family relationship enjoys in some homes is as a reflection of gendered socio-legal awareness created by globalization. In Nigeria, culturally, men dominate gender affairs. Modernization, and Westernization also contributed immensely to the freedom and social recognition enjoy by women in contemporary time. In this study, gender-based violence is identified and described as domestic violence, sexual violence, kidnapping, ritual killing and other forms of anti-social behavior that are targeted at women and young girls. Most common acts of violence against women include sexual harassment, physical violence, harmful traditional practices, emotional and psychological violence, socio-economic violence and violence against non-combatant women in conflict situation<sup>2</sup>.

It should be noted that gender-based violence has consequences on health, economic, social and psychological state of women. Gender-based violence is both biological and cultural learning attitude. Beating of wives by their husbands, are widely practiced as an acceptable form of discipline<sup>3</sup>. Many women do not consider battering by their husbands as an act of abuse because they are culturally imbued. Adherence to culture has become an excuse for violent behavior against women. At times, police responded with levity concerning violent behaviors towards women; they considered it a normal family’s affair<sup>4</sup>.

The rate of gender-based violence against women and young girls has become unprecedented during the COVID-19 lockdown. COVID-19 pandemic presented key challenges in displacement contexts with increased risks of domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and sexual exploitation and abuse, in addition to and resulting from loss of income and household stress; as well as barriers to help-seeking options for survivors<sup>5</sup>. Prevention of gender-based violence requires urgent attentions. This paper therefore, identifies

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World Health Organisation (2020) Supports Government to curb gender-based violence. News and Press Release Source <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/who-supports-government-curb-gender-based-violence>

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organisation (2020) Supports Government to curb gender-based violence. News and Press Release Source <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/who-supports-government-curb-gender-based-violence>

<sup>3</sup> Ahie, T. (2014). Experience of Domestic Violence and Acceptance of Intimate Partner Violence Among Out-of-School Adolescent Girls in Iwaya Community, Lagos State. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Accessed 20 January, 2017, from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260514535261>

<sup>4</sup> Oyediran P., & Isiugo-Abanihe, U. (2005). Violence against Women. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. 12(3)

<sup>5</sup> UNFPA (2020), Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Family Planning and Ending Gender-based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage, Interim Technical Note, 27 April, 2020

stakeholders on prevention of gender-based violence in Nigeria such as government, survivors, development partners, and non-governmental organizations. This paper is divided into Sections and subsections. Section One presents introduction of the paper. Section Two explains Cultural Transmission Theory and relates it to gender-based violence. Section Three examines the consequences of gender based-violence while, Section Four identifies the stakeholders in gender based violence. Section Five addresses prevention mechanisms and lastly, Section Six the final section, provides conclusions of the paper.

### **Cultural Transmission and Gender Based-Violence**

This section of the paper examines Cultural Transmission Theory (CT). It adopts CT as a theoretical explanation for the prevalence of gender-based violence in Nigeria. The basic idea of the theory is that human beings learn from one another in variety of ways. Systems of knowledge and behavior are culturally transmitted in human populations. This theory seeks to understand the evolutionary bases and consequences of cultural transmission<sup>6</sup>. One of the main motivations for understanding human capacity for cultural hegemony is that it is a form of the basis of humanity's progress and achievements<sup>7</sup>. Sophisticated technology, highly developed science, and elaborate social or religious implications are products of a cumulative process of cultural transmission, whereby each generation builds on the achievements of its predecessors in a gradual, approximately monotonic approach. It can be said that human beings are naturally receptive to culture, and are capable to face inherent challenges in the form of anomalies in practice. Culturally transmitted behaviors adapt to explain the indoctrinated biases of readers, researchers, and professionals.<sup>7</sup>

Culturally transmitted systems repeatedly undergo filtering through these indoctrinated biases as they are passed from individual to individual. For example, the cultural acceptance of a father to beat up his children, boyfriend slapping his girlfriend, husbands beating their wives all in the name of discipline, are culturally transmitted. Cultural transmission in the society focuses on four issues: (i) what kinds of information are stable over repeated episodes of cultural transmission? (ii) who do social learners chose to learn from when learning socially? (iii) when is social learning favored over alternatives? and (iv) how, on a mechanistic level, does social learning work?<sup>8</sup>

Human beings exploit frequency information when confronted with a social learning problem, preferentially copying the behavior of others<sup>9</sup>. Culture may be used to justify violence against women, there is a danger of presenting the role

<sup>6</sup> Kalish and Lewandowsky (2008) Introduction. Cultural transmission and the evolution of human behaviour <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/full/10.1098/rstb.2008.0147>

<sup>7</sup> Para-Mallam Schoenherr, R. A (1897). Power and Authority in Organized Religion: Disaggregating the Phenomenological Core. Sociological Analysis: Oxford University Press

<sup>8</sup> Alex Mesoudi, Andrew Whiten and Kevin N. Laland (2004) Perspective: Is Human Cultural Evolution Darwinian? Evidence Reviewed from the Perspective of "The Origin of Species" Evolution

<sup>9</sup> Charles Efferson., Rafael Lalive., Peter J Richerson., & Richard McElreath (2008). Conformists and mavericks: The empirics of frequency-dependent cultural transmission. Evolution and Human Behavior 29(1)

of culture in domestic violence as purely a mere gender relations issue<sup>10</sup>. Stereotyping of culture and tradition has negative influence on perpetuating and combating gender based violence. Cultural practices and beliefs can serve as protective factors for battering women<sup>11</sup>. For example, the Yoruba culture, tradition, and belief practices do not offer any subtle tolerance and/or give support to the perpetuation of gender based violence. The Yoruba value system and morals are inherent in cultural orientation, which often protect women's rights and freedoms<sup>12</sup>.

Cultural Transmission Theory suggests a number of means by which culture can be transmitted among members of a given society. Cultural transition varies in terms of information content, context of transmission, and mode of transmission. These factors are interrelated. They affect the mode, rate and nature of behavioral transmission, which have important implications for gender based violence in the society.

### COVID-19 Pandemic

Emergence, spread, and consequences of COVID – 19 on people's ways of life is the focus of this subsection. Culture is the total way of life. Spread of COVID – 19 affects different aspects of people's ways of life. It affects politics, economy, health, social, education, culture and other aspects of life. COVID – 19 pandemic is basically about contagious respiratory disease. It was first discovered in Wuhan, China in the late 2019. It spreads fast and highly contagious. Within months, COVID- 19 spreads to Europe and America. It killed millions in Italy, England, USA and Brazil. To save humanity, preventive methods against COVID – 19 was introduced by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Prevention mechanisms introduced by the WHO, which was adopted by the entire World included: nose covering, social distance, lockdown and vaccine.

Lockdown has significant effects on social relations, most importantly on family institution. People were forced to stay at home. Movements were restricted. Economy was shut down. Schools were closed. Lockdown created an avenue for unbridled gender-violence. Women and young girls became targets of abuses. During the lockdown, sexual orgy among men increased. There were overwhelming reports of rape, killing of women and young girls as a result of sexual abuses in the South-west, Nigeria. For example, twenty-two-year-old Halima Bulama was attacked by her husband, Ba'ariabacha in Damaturu, Yobe State for disobeying his order based on 'handling of family's affairs'<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Comment on P. Dasgupta, "The Economics of Poverty in Poor Countries"

Kaushik Basu The Scandinavian Journal of Economics

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Adeshina Afolayan, Introduction: Yorùbá Philosophy and Contemporary Nigerian Realities. <https://news.clas.ufl.edu/introduction-yoruba-philosophy-and-contemporary-nigerian-realities/>

<sup>13</sup> Umukoro, E. Outbreak: Africa's Data Journalism Alliance Against COVID-19; Pulitzer Center. Premium Times, June 5, 2020

### Gender-Based Violence

This section of the paper examines what constitute gender-based violence in Nigeria. Literature review identified the following as aspects of gender-based violence in Nigeria: sexual violence; domestic violence; ritual killing; and, kidnapping.

#### *Sexual Violence*

Uncanny sexual relationship is a form of gender-based violence<sup>14</sup>. Sexual violence could be in form of rape, stalking, dating, and any forms of abuses that are related to force or making a partner acts against his / her wish. Dating violence and sexual abuse among teenagers and young adults have become incorporated components of cultural and social norms. These norms include gender stereotypes, beliefs about masculinity and aggression or violence and ideas that violence within an intimate or dating relationship is normal. Men are thought to underestimate the importance that society places on sexual consent. Many women and young girls have lost their lives to incidence of rape. Many suffered medical, social, psychological and economic deprivation as a result of sexual violence.

Rape occurs between a man and a woman. At times, between a man and a man. Rape also occurs at home, between husband and wife. Non-consensual sexual advantage could be described as rape. Another dimension of rape occurs during conflict or war time. It is worrisome to note what happens to young school girls abducted by the Boko Haram terrorists in the Northern part of Nigeria.

#### *Domestic Violence*

- The definition and what constitutes domestic violence have evolved over the years. It is an action that has the potential to cause harm to vulnerable persons within the confines of the household. Definition of domestic violence is gender neutral because either male or female can be a victim or a perpetrator<sup>15</sup>. Domestic violence can also be described as a form of anti-social behaviors. This can take the form of either physical, psychological, or other means of inflicting pain on spouse. No country is immune to domestic violence; it occurs in every culture; irrespective of social, economic, religious, or cultural inclination<sup>16</sup>. Women can be violent in relationships with men, and violence also sometimes found in same-sex partnerships. However, overwhelming burden of domestic violence is borne by women. Domestic violence promotes aggression against one sex or gender. For example, some cultural norms among the Yoruba promote violence against women.

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<sup>14</sup> European Commission. Gender-based violence (GBV) by definition  
[https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-based-violence/what-gender-based-violence\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-based-violence/what-gender-based-violence_en)

<sup>15</sup> UNFPA. What is gender-based violence (GBV)? <https://www.friendsofunfpa.org/what-is-gender-based-violence-gbv/>

<sup>16</sup> UN Women. We are the global champion for *gender equality*. UN Women is the UN organization delivering programmes, policies and standards that uphold women's human rights and ensure that every woman and girl lives up to her full potential.

Husbands often beat their wives. Domestic violence can be in following forms<sup>17</sup>

- Acts of physical aggression (slapping, hitting, kicking and beating);
- Psychological abuse (intimidation, constant belittling and humiliating);
- Forced intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion; and
- Economic and social deprivation. (isolating a person from their family and friends, monitoring their movements, and restricting their access to information or assistance)

Perpetrators of domestic violence often demonstrate the following attribute, such as smoking, drinking, engage in behaviors that increase the risk of HIV, and endorse other unhealthy behaviors<sup>17</sup>. Incidence of domestic violence may buttress understanding of linkages between the response to acute and chronic stressful conditions<sup>18</sup>. The consequences of domestic violence are enormous. It can be beyond injury or death. Victims of domestic violence are likely to report mental, and physical health-conditions<sup>19</sup>.

Women are found of enduring domestic violence for various reasons. These reasons include fear of retribution, a lack of economic support, child welfare, dependence, family support, isolation, loneliness, and forlorn hope that man's attitude will change<sup>20</sup>. Stigmatization associated with being unmarried associated with enduring domestic violence<sup>21</sup>. Denial and neglect prevent women from reaching out for social support. Around, 20–70% abused women never reported domestic abuse to the authorities. Those who do, reach out mainly to family members and friends. Minority of the victims do report cases of domestic violence to the Police. Women endure violent relationship as long as culture permits<sup>21</sup>.

Many abused women leave violent partners after many years when their children have grown up. There are various factors accountable for women leaving abusive relationship. Leaving abusive relationship occurs, only when the violence becomes severe; and evidences that the partner is not going to stop the attitude<sup>22</sup>.

When the relationship affecting their children. Emotional and logistical support from family or friends also encouraged women in abusive relationship to

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<sup>17</sup> 1999. WHO/FCH/GWH/01.1. Putting women first: Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence Against Women.

<https://www.who.int/gender/violence/womenfirtseng.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Matthew J Breiding, Michele C Black, & George W Ryan. Prevalence and Risk Factors of Intimate Partner Violence in Eighteen U.S. States/Territories, 2005

<sup>20</sup> James R Crawford The Creation of States in International Law. Oxford Public International Law

<sup>21</sup> Zlatka Rakovec-Felser Domestic Violence and Abuse in Intimate Relationship from Public Health Perspective Health Psychol Res. 2014

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

quite<sup>23</sup>. Leaving an abusive relationship is a process, not a “one-off” event<sup>24</sup>. The process includes periods of denial, self-blame and suffering in silence. Many women leave and return several times before finally decided to end abusive relationship<sup>25</sup>. Leaving an abusive relationship does not always guarantee safety. Violence can sometimes continue and may escalate after a woman left her partner<sup>26</sup>.

#### *Ritual Killings and Kidnapping*

Ritual killings are performed to obtain human body-parts for use in ritual. Ritualists also known as head-hunters, go in search of human parts at the request of herbalists, who require them for sacrifices or for the preparation of various magical potions. Ritual erroneously motivated by the belief that it can bring power and / or wealth to individual (s)<sup>27</sup>. Vulnerable members of society such as women, young girls, elderly, and people with disabilities, as well as family members of ritualists, are targeted and killed. Dead bodies with missing organs were being discovered on a daily basis<sup>28</sup>. Many women and girls die or have their reproductive organs permanently damaged during a practice known as genital mutilation which some believe enables a woman to be more marriage-eligible<sup>29</sup>.

Boko Haram kidnapped many women and young girls in the North-East, Nigeria. The kidnapping of 273 girls from their dormitory in Chibok, Borno State in 2014<sup>30</sup> Abubakar Shekau, the Boko Haram leader, declared that girls were to be sold as sex slaves<sup>31</sup> raising international condemnation and efforts by the Government of Nigeria, Britain, France, Germany and the United States to counter the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria<sup>32</sup>. Another example, is 110 girls kidnapped by the Boko Haram terrorist group from the Government Girls' Science and Technical College, Dapchi, Yobe State, Nigeria. Five school-girls did not survive the ordeal and one other- a Christian who refused to convert to Islam was held. Until the 1990s, women's experience and differences in war time have not been taken into consideration. Perpetrators of war crimes against

<sup>23</sup> Campbell, J. C., & Soeken, K. L. (1999). Women's responses to battering over time: An analysis of change. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 14(1), 21–40.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/088626099014001002>

<sup>24</sup> Martin Daly and Margo Wilson. Crime and Conflict: Homicide in Evolutionary Psychological Perspective *Crime and Justice* Vol. 22 (1997), pp. 51-100

<sup>25</sup> Brenda Patzel Women's Use of Resources In Leaving Abusive Relationships: A Naturalistic Inquiry. *January 2002 Issues in Mental Health Nursing* 22(8):729-47 DOI:10.1080/01612840152712992

<sup>26</sup> Richard A. Schoenherr Power and Authority in Organized Religion: Disaggregating the Phenomenological Core (pp. 52-71) <https://doi.org/10.2307/3711652> (Jacobsen, 1996)

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> United State Institute of Peace, 2015. United State Institute of Peace. Ameliorating Christian/Muslim Conflict in the Middle Belt Nigeria. Accessed 16 September 2021. <http://www.usip.org/node/7329>

<sup>31</sup> Aminu Abubakar and Josh Levs, CNN 'I will sell them,' Boko Haram leader says of kidnapped Nigerian girls. May 6, 2014

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

women have not received adequate punishment<sup>33</sup>. For instance, the Nuremberg trial and Geneva conventions did not unequivocally enumerate wartime rape and sexual violence in the list of grave breach stated in the act<sup>34</sup>. Also, the influence of legislation preventing the prosecution of war crimes or amnesty under peace limited the extent of prosecuting those who committed war time crimes against women<sup>35</sup>.

However, the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and with other two of 1977 protocols recognize women's experience of sexual violence during conflict<sup>36</sup>. Also, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), 1998, Article 7 elaborates and codifies forms of war related sexual offence such as rape, sexual slavery, enforcement prostitution, pregnancy as a result of rape during conflict, sterilization, and these have been recognized as crimes against humanity or war crimes. Rape is under-reported during and after war<sup>37</sup>. The fear of social rejection and stigma that follow reporting incidence of rape and other forms of sexual violence by spouses, families and communities is factor<sup>38</sup>.

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in July 2017 expressed concern that the Boko Haram insurgency had forcefully displaced women and girls, disrupted their means of livelihood and education, separated them from families, and exposed them to sexual violence and other kinds of abuse.

### Consequences of Gender-Based Violence

This subsection discusses consequences of gender-based violence. The aftermaths of gender-based violence on victims are debilitating. It included health, economic, social, and psychological. Struggling with mental health, GBV has serious short- and long-term consequences on women's physical, sexual and reproductive and mental health as well as on their personal and social well-being<sup>39</sup>. Health consequences of violence against women include injuries, untimed/unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases including HIV,

<sup>33</sup> Ni Aolain, F., & Rooney, E. (2007). Underenforcement and Intersectionality: Gendered Aspects of Transition for Women. *International Journal Of Transitional Justice*, 1(3), 338-354. doi:10.1093/ijtj/ijm031

<sup>34</sup> Reilly, N. (2007). Seeking gender justice in post-conflict transitions: towards a transformative women's human rights approach. *International Journal of Law In Context*, 3(02). doi:10.1017/s1744552307002054

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> American Red Cross, (2011). *Summary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Their Additional Protocols. International Humanitarian Law*. Retrieved 16 June 2015, from [http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA\\_CustomProductCatalog/m6340455\\_2011AnnualReport.pdf](http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m6340455_2011AnnualReport.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> Chinkin, C., & Paradine, K. (2001). Vision and reality: Democracy and citizenship of women in the Dayton peace accord. *Yale Journal of International Law*, 26.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Bicchieri, C. (2006) *The Grammar of Society: The nature and dynamics of social norms*. New York: Cambridge University Press International Criminal Courts Report on Nigeria. Accessed 15 September 2021. <https://www.icccpi.int/itemsDocuments/OTP%20Preliminary%20Examinations/OTP%20%20Policy%20Paper%20Preliminary%20Examinations%20%202013.pdf>



pelvic pain, urinary tract infections, fistula, genital injuries, pregnancy complications, and chronic conditions<sup>40</sup>. Mental health impacts for survivors of gender-based violence include Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, substance misuse, self-harm and suicidal behaviour, and sleep disturbances<sup>41</sup>

In addition, a survivor of GBV may also face stigma and rejection from her community and family. Society usually apportion blames to the victims of rape. They believe that victims manner of dressing and their disposition men's advances determined if they will be raped or not<sup>42</sup>. Most victims of gender based violence suffered economic consequences. Their source of income may be tampered with by the perpetrator<sup>43</sup>. For example, most women in domestic abuse often depend on their husbands' income. This account for the reason why women in abusive relationship endure whatever they experienced in their husband's home.

### Stakeholders

This section examines the identified stakeholders in addressing gender-based violence. Stakeholders identified in this paper include government, health sector, victims, development partners and non-governmental organisations.  
Government

Government's activities in respect to GBV are legally regulated. Reason is that GBV is often culturally circumspect. Governments at the Federal, State and Local Government level must work with available cultural materials to reduce cases of GBV. In 2006, Nigeria adopted a Framework and Action Plan for the National Gender Policy. Consequently, the federal and state governments adopted several legislative and policy instruments, including The Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act of 2015, which prohibits female genital mutilation, harmful widowhood practices, harmful traditional practices and all forms of violence against persons in both private and public life<sup>44</sup>. These include efforts by the Nigeria Governors Forum to declare a state of emergency on Gender-Based Violence; the Inter-Ministerial Gender-Based Violence Management Committee; and the Sexual Harassment Bill. In furtherance of the legislative agenda to protect women's rights and at regional level, ECOWAS Commission, called for urgent action to address GBV, and protection the rights of children. In June, 2020, the National Human Rights Commission, the Nigeria Police, and the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) signed

<sup>40</sup> Mackie. C., MonetiF..Shakya H., and Denny, E. (2015) What are Social Norms? How are they measured? New York: UNICEF / UCSD Center on Global Justice

<sup>41</sup> Alexander-Scott M., Emily bell., and Holden J (2016) DFID Guidance note: Shifting Social Norms to tackle Violence against women and girls: Helpdesk

<sup>42</sup> UNICEF (2014) Communities care: Transforming lives and preventing violence toolkit: New York

<sup>43</sup> Berkowitz A. D. (2005) An Overview of the Social Norms Approach. Changing the Culture of College Drinking: A Socially Situated Health Communication Campaign: Hampton Press

<sup>44</sup> United State Institute of Peace (2015). Ameliorating Christian/Muslim Conflict in the Middle Belt Nigeria. Accessed 16 September 2016 from <http://www.usip.org/node/7329>

an agreement of formally joining forces to combat GBV. These developments present opportunities to further the prevention and response to GBV in northeast Nigeria<sup>45</sup>.

According to UN women<sup>46</sup>:

“We call on the Federal Government [of Nigeria] to create more institutions that can address the root causes of gender-based violence, the impunity that often goes with the scourge, implement policies and enact laws, for a stronger national response that can support victims and survivors \ of violence.”

It is important to note that some States have started various programmes to address gender-based violence in the Southwest, Nigeria:

- i. Ekiti State passed a law on gender-based violence. The law recognizes that gender-based violence includes economic abuse, which it defines as the denial of funds, refusal to contribute financially to family upkeep, denial of food and basic needs, among others. Ekiti State law also establishes a Gender-Based Violence Fund to provide, among others, basic material support for victims of gender-based violence. Such victims and their dependents may receive free shelters and vocational training from the government;
- ii. Another State, Lagos State passed bill on “Protection Against Domestic Violence Law of 2007”, the law recognizes economic abuse. Like Ekiti State, Lagos State government outlined plans to establish Funds to pay for free legal services to women and children suffering violence.<sup>47</sup>

It can be summarized in this paper that Nigerian Governments, and key stakeholders have the capacity to build more effective, transparent, and inclusive gender-based violence prevention, and response interventions<sup>48</sup>, such as:

- i. Strengthening access to justice: The COVID-19 pandemic poses extreme threats and challenges to effectively ensure justice and maintain accountability mechanisms for survivors of GBV. Policy responses to GBV must ensure the ability of the justice system and law enforcement to act as mechanisms of accountability, leverage opportunities to create a more transparent justice

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<sup>45</sup> Dr. Abiola Akiyode-Afolabi, founding director of Women Advocates Research and Documentation Center (WARDC)

<sup>46</sup> UN Women (2020) Violence against women and girls: The Shadow Pandemic. Accessed 15 July, 2021 from [www.unwomen.org/en/news](http://www.unwomen.org/en/news)

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Dr. Olumuyiwa Ojo (2020), WHO Nigeria National Professional Officer for Maternal, Sexual and Reproductive Health.

- system, and use technological innovations to protect the rights of women and girls;
- ii. Enhancing data collection: The rise in GBV amid the COVID-19 pandemic has created an incentive for government, donor and civil society organization stakeholders to strengthen collaboration to develop and roll out a system for centralized data collection and management on GBV;
  - iii. Amplifying the role of women leaders and women-led organizations: The need to scale up community education on COVID-19 presents an opportunity to integrate community education with GBV awareness and ensure that women's networks play key roles in community awareness and sensitization. Leveraging these networks and platforms will also serve to amplify women's voices and strengthen women's leadership on eliminating violence against women and girls in the immediate response and in long-term recovery phases;
  - iv. Advocacy for implementation of frameworks and passage of key legislation: The focus and attention on the rise of GBV in Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic and on the prevention and response mechanisms provides a key opportunity for stakeholders to advocate for the adoption and implementation of national and state strategic frameworks on GBV and on the domestication of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act across all states. These opportunities should inform recommendations on addressing the GBV crisis in Nigeria, both in terms of immediate response amid the COVID-19 pandemic and long-term recovery.
  - v. Amplifying the role of women leaders and women-led organizations: The need to scale up community education on COVID-19 presents an opportunity to integrate community education with GBV awareness and ensure that women's networks play key roles in community awareness and sensitization. Leveraging these networks and platforms will also serve to amplify women's voices and strengthen women's leadership on eliminating violence against women and girls in the immediate response and in long-term recovery phases;
  - vi. Advocacy for implementation of frameworks and passage of key legislation: The focus and attention on the rise of GBV in Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic and on the prevention and response mechanisms provides a key opportunity for stakeholders to advocate for the adoption and implementation of national and state strategic frameworks on GBV and on the domestication of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act across all states. These opportunities should inform recommendations on addressing the GBV crisis in Nigeria, both in terms of immediate response amid the COVID-19 pandemic and long-term recovery.

Development Partners and Non-Governmental Organizations

Upsurge in gender-based violence required combined efforts of the national governments, development partners, and non-governmental organisations. It should be noted that agencies like UNFPA, WHO, UNICEF and others work with a variety of partners to provide survivors with medical, reproductive health services and/or psychosocial care as part of the commitment to rehabilitate women and girls who have been abused<sup>49</sup>; they also, help them overcome their sexual violence ordeal. In 2019, WHO assisted in creating awareness about the health consequences of GBV among 149 governments, development partners, Chief Security Officers and Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) in Adamawa and Borno. WHO has also put in place, health sector plans for responding to GBV in Borno and Adamawa states as well as trained over 150 WHO hard-to-reach mobile team members to provide first line services mainstreamed into other essential services. To date, the teams have sensitized over 9 000 women and men on GBV and have provided first line GBV services to 29 people<sup>50</sup>:

However, efforts are lacking in the health sector which is often times, the first entry point for most survivors of sexual violence. The need therefore, exists for mainstreaming GBV services within the healthcare system and linking survivors to other services. Bridging the gaps in GBV Presently, WHO is collaborating with the Federal Ministry of Health to adapt the Clinical protocols on management of Intimate partner violence and sexual violence and also develop an action plan for health sector response to GBV. In the Northeast, WHO continue to provide advocacy and sensitization of the communities and first line GBV services and referral. Another Professional Officer for Maternal, Sexual and Reproductive Health also added<sup>51</sup>:

Dire need for more funding to build capacity of health workers on how to adequately respond to survivors, ensure optimal referral to other services including legal and social/protection services remain the main challenges in GBV response. Health facilities need capacity to identify and provide information about GBV services available locally and treatment for survivors such as hotlines, shelters, rape crisis centres, and counselling<sup>52</sup>.

### Survivor

There is no strong enforcement of violence against women laws. Women's rights activists believe there is a need for mass enlightenment and strong legal actions against perpetrations<sup>53</sup>. Timely reporting to the Police, Civil Defence and other security agencies is the main responsibility of survivors of GBV. Survivors of gender based violence have to work closely with the security agencies in order to prevent incidences of gender based violence in Nigeria. Culturally, it is

<sup>49</sup> Dr. Olumuyiwa Ojo (2020), WHO Nigeria National Professional Officer for Maternal, Sexual and Reproductive Health

<sup>50</sup> World Health Organisation. Gender and COVID-19: Advocacy brief 14 May 2020 COVID-19: Risk communication and community engagement

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

<sup>53</sup> Usigb, L. (2020 ) Nigerian women say 'no' to gender-based violence. Accessed 13 December, 2020 from <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/news/nigerian-women-say-%E2%80%98no%E2%80%99-gender-based-violence>

not usual for women to speak up in public, so many female victims of violence may suffer in silence

### Prevention

This section of the paper examines the following prevention mechanisms to gender based violence such as mass enlightenment and education, arrest and prosecution, workshop and training, and stipend.

#### *Mass Enlightenment and Education*

A project named "A Man Respects a Woman" which was aimed at reducing sexual assaults against women, increase accurate perceptions of non-coercive sexual behavior norms and reduce self-reported coercive behaviours by men<sup>54</sup>. The project used a social norms marketing campaign targeting men, a theatre presentation addressing socialization and male peer- to- peer education to convey the following positive findings of a student survey: (1) a man respects a woman - nine out of ten men stopped the first time on their date say "no" to sexual activity;(2) a man always prevents manipulation - three out of four men think it is not acceptable to pressure a date to drink alcohol to improve their chances of getting their date to have sex; and (3) a man talks before romance - most men believe talking about sex does not ruin the romance of the moment, and it can confirm that you have consent.

The role of bystanders in preventing sexually abusive acts – an alternative to targeting perpetrators or victims of violence including norms that support or tolerate coercion within relationships and encourage both males and females to speak out against sexual abuse and to help those in trouble. Messages such as "Know your power. Step in, speak up"<sup>54</sup>. "You can make a difference"<sup>55</sup>. "a man leading a drunk woman upstairs at a house party". Also, safe bystander behaviour to intervene and prevent sexual abuse equally important: for example, friends planning to stop the man from taking the woman upstairs. These prevention mechanisms were criticized because most perpetrators failed to exhibit greater awareness of sexual assault, and greater willingness to participate in actions aimed at reducing sexual violence<sup>56</sup>.

For example, in targeted male perpetrators and potential perpetrators of domestic violence. Preliminary research with male perpetrators found that campaign messages such as "real men don't hit women" and "your mates will reject you", or those highlighting the consequences of domestic violence on their partners, would be ineffective. However, those messages that conveyed the damaging effects of domestic violence children were found to be powerful, and were consequently given prominence in the campaign. The messages called upon men to accept responsibility for their behaviour and take action to end the

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<sup>54</sup> Abbey A. Misperceptions of friendly behavior as sexual interest: A survey of naturally occurring incidents. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*. 1987;11:173-194.

<sup>55</sup> RAINN. Western Australia, the "Freedom from Fear" campaign (2009) Your Role in Preventing Sexual Assault

<sup>56</sup> Ibid

abuse<sup>57</sup>. It used television, radio, and other media, and was accompanied by a helpline for men to receive counseling, advice and information. Evaluation of the campaign five years after implementation found a smaller proportion of men reporting emotional abuse of their partners than before the campaign. Furthermore, there was a significant reduction in the proportion of women who reported “being yelled at” and “being threatened with being hit”<sup>57</sup>

#### *Arrest and Prosecution*

The roles of police, court, civil defence and other security agencies are crucial to the prevention of gender-based violence. Laws against sex trafficking and abuse have been promulgated in Nigeria; but there is no existing law that specifically prohibits a husband from physically abusing his wife<sup>58</sup>. Violence against women in the home is most often treated by the police as a private issue or, at best, as misconduct. Prompt arrest, through investigation, quick dispensation of justice will help in prevention of gender based violence in Nigeria. Hybrid court-“Family Court” is needed to curb menace of gender based violence in Nigeria.

#### *Scholarship and Training*

Some cultures encourage denying women and girls access to education, land and or inheritance. For example, 43% of girls in Nigeria are married off before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and 17% are married before they turn 15<sup>59</sup>. It is important to note how this aphorism as related to the importance of education and scholarship to women’s life, “Train a woman to train the nation”. Scholarship should be given to young girls to further their education. Education to be financed by the government to be made compulsory for girl-child up to secondary level. Also, it is significant to point out in this section that law enforcement agents need special training on how to handle reported cases of gender based violence. There are various factors associated to the reasons why many women in Nigeria refused to reported cases of domestic violence to the police such as culture, religion, economy, fear of unknown, lack of recognition and attitude of law enforcement agents towards reported cases domestic violence,

Stipends

Many cases of violence against women in Nigeria are influenced by financial factors<sup>60</sup>. These factors range from husbands preventing their wives from working or denying them funds for necessities such as children’s school fees, health services and even food. For instance, several women had problems with insufficient funds to buy air time to make calls. Beyond this, financial issues prevent women from leaving bad and abusive situations. Many of the women

<sup>57</sup> Department for Community Development Annual Report 2005.

<https://www.itseyeris.com/book/department-for-community-development-annual-report-2005>

<sup>58</sup> Ibid

<sup>59</sup> According to the charity Girls Not Brides. Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage. <https://namati.org/network/organization/girls-not...>

<sup>60</sup> The Centre for Health Ethics Law and Development (CHELD), its 2015 report on Violence Against Women in Nigeria and the Need for a Women’s Fund, CHELD noted that

have been beaten, prevented from working, and earn income to keep them financially dependent on the abuser.

### **Conclusion**

This paper sets to examine efforts of stakeholders towards prevention of gender based violence. Cultural Transmission Theory was used to examine the prevalence of gender based violence in Nigeria. Two factors emerged (1) culture; and (2) learning. The two factors supported the argument that gender based violence is social rather than biological. This paper also identified gender based violence including domestic violence, sexual violence, ritual killings and kidnapping. Increase in sexual violence and domestic violence were related to the incidence of COVID-19 pandemic. However, this paper identified some stakeholders in addressing phenomenon of gender based violence such as government, international and non-governmental organizations, security agencies and survivors. This study concluded that police and courts need new approaches of tackling cases of GBV. Police should be trained, attend workshops, conferences, and seminars on a regular basis to learn how to properly investigate and treat victims of gender based violence. To eradicate GBV, police need to create a special unit in each of its command to handle reported cases. Additional police stations and posts should be created to make police more accessible to GBV'S victims. Courts should decide cases of GBV without fear or favor. Additionally, cultural consideration should be separated from legal reasoning when adjudicating domestic violence cases. Creation of hybrid court- "Family Court" should be established for prompt dispensation of justice for GBV related cases. The government needs to create victim support centers for victims of GBV. It should create social support, protection and empowerment for women. Finally, women who have the courage to speak out about domestic should be supported irrespective of marital status.

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