

ROLE OF EDUCATION IN PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Education is the right of every human being and it is essential instrument for actualization of the objectives of freedom, equal development and peace in the society. A free and fair education benefits both sexes and it will result to equal relationship to men and women which will in turn produce healthy and productive human beings in the society. Violence against women and girls are the most common type of violence in the globe today. Violence itself is a social behaviour that is noticed in long -and short- term socialization effects. People perceive violence in both cultural, and social norms that is why women and girls are seen as a second-class citizen. It is the society tradition that places women and girls to the relegated position they find themselves today. They are limited to education and job opportunities and are exposed to different kinds of violence such as rape, sexual assault, teen pregnancy, early marriage, female genital cutting, physical abuse, abortion, domestic violence and so on. This type of violence takes place at home, offices, schools, streets and the society at large. Women shelter should be provided in Nigeria for victims of violence because these types of violence can affect the women physically, emotionally, psychologically. Physically violence generally is a complex, multifaceted societal and global matter. This paper examined different types of violence that women and girls experience in the society causes,

preventions, recommendations and conclusion were made. Violence in our society can be prevented if stringent measures are passed to perpetrators. Women should try all they can to acquire knowledge (Western education) so as to be relevant to the changing world. Women police stations should be introduced in Nigeria like in Brazil where women are free to express their grievances to their women folk. Courses that will teach violence should be introduced in our schools at various levels in the society at large.

Keywords: Violence, women, girls, and Education

Introduction

Education is a tool for eradicating all forms of social discrimination, deprivation and also an instrument for attaining a united and peaceful society. It is a vital instrument to both individual and the entire nation. Education develops an individual and makes him or her desirable member of the society. It is also a machine for social change, economic transformation and political advancement especially if it is designed and provided to take care of gender differences. Education is a cornerstone around which the development of a nation's political, socio-economic and technology revolves. Okafor, (2013); Mahuta, (2007) also stated that schools are established as a deliberate attempt by societies to teach social values to younger generation be it male or female.

Violence itself is a social behaviour that is noticed in both long and short-term socialization effects. Cultural and social norm are the way people perceive violence and it is a serious affair. From different view, what form violent act are mostly contributed by culture and context of a particular society. World Health Organization (2002) defined violence as intentional use of physical force of power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting into injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprecation. If closely looked into the definition, violence of any kind has a negative result on the receiver. Whether interpersonal violence, suicidal behaviour and armed conflict as well as points to crucial role of power relations in determining the occurrences of violence. Physical force, threats and intimidation can also be counted as violence. Violent behaviour can cause injuries and death, which can result to psychological harm (Oni & Agbaire 2013). In a nut shell, violence is the actual or

threatened use of physical, verbal, or emotional power, intimidation, or harassment, by or against individuals or groups which results in physical and/or psychological harm, or is harmful to the social well-being of an individual or group of individuals. The definition of violence has shown that violence is any behaviour to mankind that negates his or her well-being. Violence against women and girls can be categorized into social, physical and psychological violence physical violence: This type of violence is manifested in the physical and it is a type of violence that is seen and not a hidden type. It is in form of kicking killing, holding someone down, pinching, strangling, cutting, shaping, smacking) bulky and so on. This type of violence act can cause some amount of pain or discomfort on the victim and it is the most manifested of violent act.

In line with this, Kofi Annan the then Secretary-General of the United Nations in a 2006 report posted on United Nations Development fund for women. The most common type of violence against women in Africa and Nigeria inclusive are rape, economic abuse, forced prostitution, female genital mutilation, child marriage, female homicide, cultural heritage, acid bathe, cultural heritage, political molestation, assault and corporal punishment. Most of these violence acts have been on the timeline that it is perpetrated on women and girls by their family members, friends and partners. That is why some of these violence acts are in form of family violence, school violence and intimate partner violence. These types of violence can affect the women physically, emotionally, psychologically and socially. Violence generally is a complex, multifaceted societal and global matter (Sule et al, 2013).

General Violence against Women and Girls in the Society

This researcher looks at violence against women and girls holistically and not in part. This is because the first step of socialization takes place in the family. The family as an agent of socialization has its own share of violence against women and girls. Horton and Hurt, (2006) stated that the family's duty is to provide intimate close affection and emotional responses to the members of the family, placement of status ascription and offering of physical, economics and psychological protection to all members of the family. The sociologists see all these as the primary functions of the family but the contemporary families have moved away from all these functions and are after economic pursuit and has drastically, stir away from these God

given function to the detriment of the child, women and girls in particular (Scott and Marshall, 2005).

Sule et al (2013) stated that all the forms of violence against women and girls erupt from so many complex and interconnected institutionalized and all these sums up to manifest in the history of inequality in power relationship between women and men. This violence against women and girls is used to curb and tame women's autonomy and sexual behaviours. This is only used to perpetrate gender norms which defined the role of women and men in the family community and society at large. Time maps out the acceptable role desirable behaviours of women and men, boys and girls within a given culture in the family, community and society.

Most types of violence against women and girls as carried out by some studies are found in unequal gender relations, their social norms and discriminatory practices which are low self-esteem, extreme jealousy, difficulty in regulating anger, inferiority complex in education and low socioeconomic status, men with strong traditional beliefs, alcohol, family, community or victims themselves (EFA 2015). The commonest of all these violence are rape, acid attack, molestation, assault, corporal punishment, marital rape, ambushing, stealing, drinking, drug, cultism, insinuation, human trafficking forced prostitution, mistreatment of widows or acquaintances accused of witch craft, gangsters use of weapons, vandalism, non-consensual touching, seduction or sexual harassment by a teacher or other male in the school. Encouragement of male dominance or aggression within school, domestic violence, and it is dowry violence, acid throwing, stalking, sexual harassment, perpetrated by partners, family members friends forced marriage are also forms of violence.

Origin of Violence

Most people believe that violence against women and girls started in Rome where the Roman Law gave men the right to Chastise their wives even to the point of death (1917), 18th-Century English law also gives men right to punish their wives using stick, England and America also allow men to punish their wives until the late 19th century. (Ireland 2013).

Till today, violence against women and girls exists everywhere globally and there is no culture, region, or country where the freedom of women is

secured. Although it is more common in the developing countries examples are dowry violence, bride burning, acid throwing, associated with countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Srilanka and Nepal; South Asia, Female genital intimation associated with specific region in Africa. Asia and Caucasus are known for marriage by abduction, sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania for abuse related to payment of bride price, trafficking, and forced marriage.

State violence is also a serious violence against women and girls. When there is militarism and conflict in the society, violence against women and girls increases because there will be war rapes in warfare in the countries affected. This is seen even in the Bible Zechariah 14:2 which says that their little children will be dashed to death before their eyes, their homes will be sacked and their wives will be raped Isaiah 13:16. These types of violence are the ones committed by soldiers, other combatant or civilian during armed conflict or war or in times of military. In a situation like these women are forced into prostitution or sexual slavery by the power in position for example in the time of World War II the Japanese military, established brothels filled with “comfort women” girls and women who were forced into sexual slavery for soldiers. In Kovono Ghetto, Jewish Bangladesh Liberation war, Bosnian war, etc and prisoners also had access to Jewish women forced into camp brothels by Nazis who used them as they like, Islamic state of Iraq and the Levants capture of Iraqi in (June 2014), and even December 2014, Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights announced that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant had killed over 150 women and girls in Fallujah who refused to participate in sexual Jihad. This is how serious violence against women and girls are during conflict period. In 14 June, 2012 China and Liberistan, committed forced sterilization and abortion against women which led to the death of some of them. In Nigeria, the Boko Haram camp, sexual violence against women takes place every now and then by the insurgency.

The police are not left out in this type of violence against women and girls. (Barbana & Wendy 2010). Women and girls also faced with stoning and flogging in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Pakistan, Yemen, the United Arab Emirates and some states in Nigeria as punishment for adultery (<https://www.google.com>). About 125 women and girls in Africa and Middle East have experienced female genital mutilation

<http://www.unicef.org/media/files/FGCM-Lo-res.pdf>. According to UNICEF report, the top rates for FGM are in Somalia (with 98 percent, women affected), Guinea 96 Percent, Djibouti (93 Percent), Egypt (91 Percent, Eritrea (89 Percent), Mali (89 Percent), Sierra Leone (88 Percent), Sudan (88 Percent), Gambia (79 Percent), and Guinea-Bissau (50 Percent). <http://www.unicef.org/media/files/FGCM-Lo-ves.pdf>. Breast Ironing, Obstetrics Sport-related violence are violence against women and girls.

All these violence against women and children has its effect on women generally. If women and girls are prone to these different types of violence in the family, school and society, the globe will always be filled with conflict always and the conflict will not give room for development at all levels and this will crumble the efforts of Education for all (EFA, 2015), Millennium Development Goal (MDG), United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations (UN) policies that stipulate modalities for nations to embark on and to make education free, compulsory and universal for every citizen there is still obstacle for women and girls because of various kinds of violence against them (UNICEF 2004).

All these conventions and actions plans in their different forms shows that violence of any kind against women and girls is an abuse of their rights and limitations to their education attainment. It is clear evidence that despite all these conventions, nothing tangible has happened to put a stop to violence against women and girls. In one of Nigerias five main national goals is building a just and egalitarian society. Plan (2008) stated that a country that experiences constant war, violence against women and girls in politics, culture, economic, legal, education etc will always lag behind in all spheres of life but will strive in vices of different types which will result in violence.

Causes of Violence against Women and Girls

The definition of violence has shown that violence is any behaviour to mankind that negates his or her well- being. Violence against women and girls can be categorized into the social, physical and psychological violence.

Different types of Violence against Women and Girls

Different forms of violence are experienced by these set of humans in our society today. It includes physical, verbal, sexual, emotional, social, financial, spiritual and stalking abuse. It can happen at work, street or at home. These violence acts at times are committed by strangers but most times by people who are so close to them like husbands, or partner, father, uncle, neighbours etc. It can happen to anyone irrespective of location, health status, culture, sexual identity, gender, race, age, income, ethnicity, creed, ability, sexual orientation and others and this act can have terrible effect on them. They are:

In war and conflict time, rape is the commonest means of weapon against women and girls. This type of violence is committed under duress and force at times guns and other objects are used in brutal force.

Sexual Assault: This type of violence can be informed of attempted rape or contact that stops short of rape. It can be in different forms and it occurs at work, home, at commenting levels. Sexual assault is a very serious offence. This act may also be perpetrated by family members or trusted community members and it does not change the severity or danger of their actions.

Domestic Violence: This type of violence is a physical sexual attack in the home or within or outside the family perpetrated by intimate relationship. Violence like this include marital rape, assault and battery partner violence, sexual abuse of children, in the household, globally, 40-70 percent of all female murder are committed by an intimate partner.

Dowry Murder: In this violence, the bride's husband or in-laws simply because her parents increase her bride price in which her or his family cannot provide. This can lead to women being burnt to death.

Early Marriage: This means forced marriage to a young vulnerable girl who is under eighteen years. This type of marriage jeopardizes the young girls physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.

Feticide: This is a systematic killing of women and girls. It includes torture, mutilation, cruelty and sexual violence. This type of violence is common in Latin and Central America and countries, even due it occurs in often countries. Sex-selective abortions are all forms of feticides. It is more common in Asia and countries where there is a limit of birth per family.

Female Genital Cutting: This is old tradition and understanding of purity and chastity in the name of rituals or rites of passage, cutting operation, and it can cause irreparable pain and health problems. This type of violence

affects almost two million women and girls each year. About 100 and 140 million women and girls in the world have assumed to have undergone female genital cutting.

Honour Killing: Violence in this form is murder of women because the community or family sees them as disgracing them either in premarital sex, accused, adultery, and inappropriate behaviour. Women and girls have been publicly stoned to death, burned alive, driven away, and attacked with acid for such acts. This is because they believe that she has brought disgrace or shame to the family. It can come in the form of: dating or talking to boys, having sexual relationship outside marriage, Wearing wrong clothes according to parents

Refusing forced marriage. To the family, they believe that violence can bring back the family's reputation. They now resort to beating, threats, killing etc to the victim.

Child-bearing: The society especially African society believes that a woman should produce all babies in her womb. The women do this with no antenatal care, her economic activities, no consideration for her general health status. Pregnant women in most cases are beaten into stupor to the point of miscarriage.

Death of a Husband: In the Igbo tradition, if a husband dies, the man's wife must be responsible and she is subjected to all forms of treatment to know whether she is innocent or not for example staying with the dead husband with no food, nor bath, night and day till the dead husband is buried, she drinks the water used to bath her husband, she is made to shave her hair by her husband's sisters, married outside or within the community, cry early in the morning every day for eight days. If she did not have a male child, her husband's relations share all her husband's property. The woman too will be made to marry her husband brother or cousin by force like a property for inheritance. She is asked to wear sack cloth for one full year.

Teen Pregnancy: In some community in Oru East Imo State Mgbidi to be precise when some young are pregnant without doing what the culture demand from her in her first menstrual period she is driven away from her town for life with her pregnancy and man who pregnant her is made to remain in that same community/town once the land is purified. If the man who impregnated her is from another town, he is forced to marry her and the girl will not come to her parent home again.

Physical Abuse: This includes abusive words, actions and criminal acts that aim at relegating and degrading, humiliating or to harm women and girls.

Criminal Harassment/Stalking: This is crime which involves an act that will make one to be afraid of someone for safety or their loved one. It includes watching or following someone, making threats that cause someone to fear for their safety, threatening someone's child, family, pets or friends etc.

Violence against women and children is a global phenomenon for more than six decades now. It can come in form of rape, sexual assault, limited access to education, physical abuse, force and early marriage, teen pregnancy, honour killings and so on. Thia, (2009) affirmed that discrimination against women and girls is a global concern but it is more common in developing countries like Latin America and Asian countries that experience gender gaps in literacy, education, employment income and health issues.

Women in China for example are forced to undergo sterilization and abortion to prevent them from having more than one child. Village young girls in Thailand are sold by their parents to brothel owners and in Arab, women are killed for sexual misconduct such as adultery, in African, girls are forced with genital mutilation for their clitoris not to compete with the penis (Agu 2013).

Effect of Violence in Women and Girls

Violence can cause series of health problems like stress, anxiety, depression, pain syndromes, phobias, post-traumatic stress disorder, poorer physical health problems, low self-esteem, alcoholism, extreme jealousy, difficulty in regulating anger, inferiority complex in education and low socioeconomic status, men with strong traditional beliefs, family, community or victims themselves, somatic and medical symptoms (World Health Organization, 2000)

Role of Education in the Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls

Education is the key to ending violence globally and in Nigeria in particular. The cornerstone of women and girls' equality is education. In the general speaking, it is the duty of men to control their women and a

common way to punish transgression is through violence. Many men who are educated value educated women and their usefulness in assisting in home affairs. Education is one of the socializing agents that could be used to curb violence against women and girls. With the aid of education, some harmful cultural norms, beliefs and values can be curb through the education of the women and girls.

Women and girls should be given equal access to quality education like their male counterparts to make them to know their rights as human and exercise their rights freely. Education will enable women and girls to know how to move away from violence when it occurs. Education will enable them to have a good life, stand on their own and contribute meaningfully in their homes and their parent's home as well. Education will enable the women to read and understand the law that protect them and advocate for the type of education that suits them. It will make them to make more decision for a living and contribute meaningfully to the family's income and make use of the learning to benefit the family and the community as a whole. Education of the women and girls will enable them to convince the entire citizen of the value of education for women. Education will enable them to know the root causes of violence and how to move away from it. Education will also promote equal role for both genders healthy relationship. Education will enable women and girls to make better decision and work on them and their families—which will benefit the entire family. Education will enable women to have sexual and reproductive power. It enables them to have access to information communication technology (ICT) Education of women and girls will enable them inculcate the spirit of good housewife and neighbourhood. It will enable them to prepare for future mothers able to take care of the home front and a good mother. Education will also enable them to acquire knowledge, which will fortify them against marginalization, discrimination, denial of equal employment opportunities. It will assist them to modernize some of our barbaric customs. (Okafor, 2013)

The family is the first step in primary socialization of its members especially women and girls. The family should always be conscious of its discrimination of gender or giving the male child upper hand more than the women and girls by giving them equal chance to excel in life, (Agir, 2013).

Conclusions

Education is a corner stone around which the development of a nation's political, social, and economic and technology revolves. If any nation can develop, that nation should jettisoned violence of all types especially that of women and girls because women and girls constitute the major nation's population. Violence against this set of gender is harm to the basic rights, freedoms, health and some of them are rooted in families, schools and society and the world at large should try all they can to stop violence of all types so that society can move forward in all ramifications.

Recommendations

Women should try all they can to acquire knowledge (Western education) so as to be relevant to the changing world. Women police stations should be introduced in Nigeria like in Brazil where women are free to express their grievances to their women folk.

Women's shelter should be provided in Nigeria for victims of war. Gender specific laws and policies should be put in place for protection of women's human right. Violence against women should be criminalized and not to be taken as minor offences. The laws should be made known to all and sundry especially women they should be sensitize about these existing laws. Cases should be filed without victims' representation. Courses that will teach violence generally should be introduce in schools at all levels. Human right education should also be introduced so as enable women know their rights. Religious laws should not be misinterpreted or used to inflict harmful laws against women. Education campaign should be encouraged and dangers of violence against women generally should emphasize.

The government should try all it can to wipe poverty in the society by giving loan to parent's women and even providing free education and jobs to its citizenry. Victims of violence should report causes so that there should be enough data so as to know the weight of the offense in the society. If closely looked into the definition, violence of any kind has a negative result on the receiver. Whether interpersonal violence, suicidal behaviour and armed conflict as well as points to crucial role of power relations in determining the occurrences of violence. Physical force, threats and intimation can also be counted as violence. Violent behaviour can lead to death and injury,

which can result to psychological harm and deprivation to mal-development violence of any type, can be avoided.

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