

FACTORS INFLUENCING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE ON GIRLS AND WOMEN DURING COVID-19 ERA: SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS PERCEPTION IN BAYELSA STATE OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study was designed to investigate principals and teachers' perception of genders based violence (GBV) on girls and women during COVID-19 era. The sample of one hundred and forty (140) subjects was randomly selected. Two research questions were raised and answered using descriptive statistics with 2.50 and above acceptance level while below 2.50 rejection level. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested at the alpha level of 0.05 significance using the t-test statistical analysis. The results revealed that there was no significant difference in the perceptions of principals and teachers on types and factors that influence gender based violence on girls and women during COVID-19 era. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the school system should be used to stop gender based violence (GBV) before it starts: regular curricula, sexuality education, school counseling programs and school health services should be utilized to convey the message that violence is wrong and can be prevented, suggest alternative models of masculinity, teach conflict-resolution skills and provide assistance to children and adolescents who may be victims or perpetrators of violence.

Keywords: Factors, Gender Based Violence, Physical violence, Sexual violence, COVID-19.

Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) is an oppressive form of gender inequality, posing a fundamental barrier to the equal participation of women and men in social, economic, and political spheres. As noted in "Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity," the World Bank's Inter Agency Standing Committee defines GBV as "an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between males and females" (Klugman, Hanmer, Twigg, Hasan, McCleary-Sills, and Santa-Maria 2014). The United Nations defines GBV as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (UN, 2020). GBV includes intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual assault, female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation and abuse, child abuse, female infanticide, and child marriage (Arango, Morton, Gennari, Kiplesund, and Ellsberg 2014). Such violence impedes gender equality and the achievement of a range of development outcomes. Experiencing violence precludes women from contributing to or benefiting from development initiatives by limiting their choices and ability to act (UN Women, 2020).

Physical abuse is a pattern of physical assaults and threats used to control another person. It includes punching, hitting, choking, biting, and throwing objects at a person, kicking, pushing and using a weapon such as a gun or a knife.

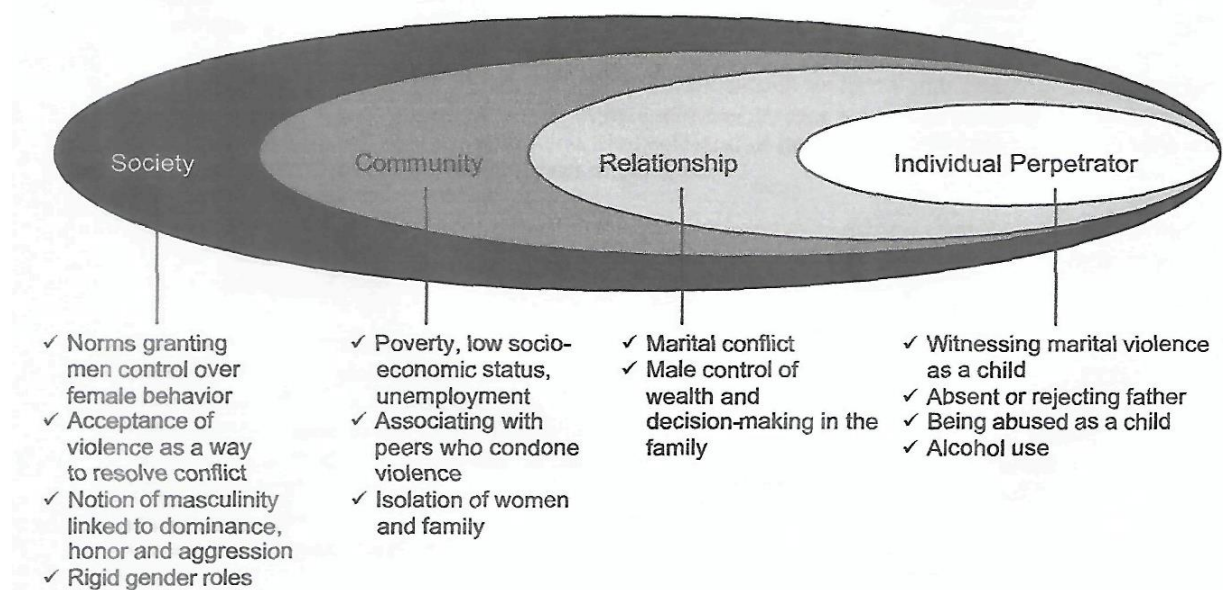
Sexual violence has been defined as any sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances or acts to traffic women's sexuality, using coercion, threats of harm or physical force by any person regardless of relationship to the survivor in any setting. The scope of this definition has been expanded to include forced sex, sexual coercion, and rape and child abuse. In this study, sexual violence is defined as any unwanted sexual act, such as forced sex.

COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11th 2020. The virus is now present in Nigeria and other African countries (UN, 2020). Though Nigeria has a low number of confirmed cases compared to other parts of the world, it has led to the application of lockdowns, require self-quarantine and restrict gatherings and movement of people, in order to help contain the outbreak, which have detrimental impact on girls and women (Mahuku et al, 2020). In times of crisis, due to school closures, loss of livelihood, significant stress on families and lack of access to safe spaces and services, girls and women face great risks. They are more frequently exposed to gender based violence (Plan International, 2019). Adolescent girls and women are among the most marginalized and at-risk populations when outbreaks and emergencies such as COVID-19 occur. Evidence from similar crises has shown to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities of girls and women, create new ones and deepens gender and social inequalities (UNFPA, 2020; World Vision, 2020). Such negative impact could lead to a significant reversal in gains made over the last decades in women's and girls' human capital, economic empowerment, voice and agency (Grown & Sanchez-Paramo, 2020), and thus threaten the commitment of the African Union's Agenda 2030 to eliminate gender disparities at all levels (Odhiambo, 2020).

Initial evidence has shown that GBV has raised around the world as a result of COVID-19 related movement restrictions. In China, for example, calls to women's shelters have tripled during the outbreak, and in France there has been a nationwide spike of 30% in GBV during the quarantine (Plan International, 2020). In Kenya, in the first two weeks of April, there was a 35% increase in GBV cases and a 50% increase in violence against girls (World Vision, 2020)

However, according to the International Labour Organization (2020) GBV was defined by different variables such as verbal abuse, slap on the face, throwing something at one, pushing, biting, knife threat, beaten up, burning/acid attack, stabbing, forced sexual intercourse and Gun threat among others. Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (2016) identified theft, verbal harassment, sexual assault, and manipulative "sugar daddy" relationships with adult males.

Several factors influence GVB on girls and women. It ranges from the individual, relationship, community, and societal levels (Sili, 2020). According to Heise (1998) in his social ecological model identified factors that influence GBV on girls and women to include factors at the individual, relationship, community, and societal levels. This is shown in the model below:



Source: Heise, L. (1998). Violence Against Women: An Integrated, Ecological Framework

The model can best be visualized as four concentric circles. The innermost circle represents the biological and personal history that affects an individual's behavior in his/her relationships. The second circle represents the immediate context in which GBV takes place frequently: the family or other intimate or acquaintance relationship. The third circle represents the institutions and social structures, both formal and informal, in which relationships are embedded- neighborhood, workplace, social networks, and peer groups. The fourth, outermost circle is the economic and social environment, including cultural norms. A wide range of studies suggest that several factors at each of these levels, while not the sole factors, may increase the likelihood of GBV (Sili, 2020).

- ✚ At the individual level these factors include the perpetrator being abused as a child or witnessing marital violence in the home, having an absent or rejecting father, and frequent use of alcohol.
- ✚ At the level of the family and relationship, cross-cultural studies have cited male control of wealth and decision-making within the family and marital conflict as strong predictors of abuse.
- ✚ At the community level women's isolation and lack of social support, together with male peer groups that condone and legitimize men's violence, predict higher rates of violence.
- ✚ At the societal level studies around the world have found that violence against women is most common where gender roles are rigidly defined and enforced and where the concept of masculinity is linked to toughness, male honor, or dominance. Other cultural norms associated with abuse include tolerance of physical punishment of women and children, acceptance of violence as a means to settle interpersonal disputes, and the perception that men have "ownership" of women.

An ecological approach to GBV argues that no one factor alone "influence" violence but rather that a number of factors combine to raise the likelihood that a particular man in a particular setting may act violently toward a woman. In the ecological framework, social and cultural norms-such as those that assert men's inherent superiority over women - combine with

individual-level factors - such as whether a man was abused himself as a child - to determine the likelihood of gender-based violence. The more risk factors present, the higher the likelihood of violence. This study therefore sets out to investigate the factors that influence GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era as perceived by principals and teachers of secondary schools in Bayelsa State of Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the types of GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era as perceived by principals and teachers of secondary schools in Bayelsa State?
2. What are the factors that influence GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era as perceived by principals and teachers of secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between the perception of principals and teachers on the types of GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era.
2. There is no significant difference between the perception of principals and teachers on the factors that influence GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the perception of principals and teachers on GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era. Specifically, the study examines:

- The types of GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era.
- The factors that influence GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era.

Methods and Procedures

The design utilized in this study was ex-post facto and descriptive in nature. Consequently, no independent variable was manipulated. The population of the study comprised of all principals and teachers of secondary schools in Bayelsa State of Nigeria. The sample was made up of forty (40) principals and one hundred (100) teachers which were selected using the simple random sampling technique. The selection was restricted to only principals and teachers with Masters Degree. The questionnaire was used to collect data and this was divided into two sections. The first section sought information about the bio-data of the respondents, while the second section sought information on the types and factors that influence GBV on girls and women. A four-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A) Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) was used to measure the items in the instrument. The face and content validity of the instrument was established. The reliability of the instrument was tested using the test-re-test method and the (r) value obtained was 0.78 as the coefficient of subject stability. The research questions were analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation and the decision level is 2.50 as acceptance level while the rejection level is anything below 2.50. The hypotheses were analyzed using the t-test statistics, and tested at alpha level of significance of 0.05.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: What are the types of GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era as perceived by principals and teachers of secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Principals and Teachers Perception on the Types of GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era

S/ N	Items	Principals N= 40			Teachers N= 100		
		Mean	SD	Decision	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Verbal abuse	3.38	0.84	Agreed	3.12	0.90	Agreed
2	Slap on the face or ear	3.28	0.78	Agreed	3.06	0.97	Agreed
3	Biting	3.30	0.65	Agreed	3.19	0.73	Agreed
4	Knife threat	3.25	0.71	Agreed	3.25	0.72	Agreed
5	Beaten up	3.33	0.66	Agreed	3.16	0.86	Agreed
6	Burning/Acid attack	3.18	0.71	Agreed	3.09	0.85	Agreed
7	Stabbing	3.48	0.64	Agreed	3.44	0.77	Agreed
8	Forced sexual intercourse	3.23	0.65	Agreed	3.27	0.68	Agreed
9	Gun threat	3.29	0.69	Agreed	2.95	0.82	Agreed
	Cumulative Average	3.29	0.69		3.17	0.81	

Source: Computed from Fieldwork, 2020

Table 1, shows that both principals and teachers agreed that Verbal abuse, Slap on the face or ear, Biting, Knife threat, Beaten up, Burning/Acid attack, Stabbing, Forced sexual intercourse and Gun threat are types of GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era, since the means are above 2.50 which is the acceptance level (agreed) while below 2.50 is the rejection level (disagreed). The table has also shown the cumulative average mean of principals and teachers perception as 3.29 and 3.17 respectively.

Research Question 2: What are the factors that influence GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era as perceived by principals and teachers of secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Principals and Teachers Perception on the factors that influence GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era

S/ N	Items	Principals N= 40			Teachers N= 100		
		Mean	SD	Decision	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Rigid gender roles and stereotypes	2.93	0.80	Agreed	2.71	0.90	Agreed
2	Socially constructed norms of masculinity and femininity	3.35	0.66	Agreed	3.49	0.60	Agreed
3	Societal discriminatory laws	3.35	0.64	Agreed	3.24	0.79	Agreed
4	Poverty/ unemployment	3.10	0.78	Agreed	3.03	0.90	Agreed
5	Low socio-economic status	3.08	0.76	Agreed	2.88	0.86	Agreed
6	Depression	3.05	0.75	Agreed	3.18	0.82	Agreed
7	Education level	2.83	0.87	Agreed	2.46	0.92	Disagreed
8	Young age	3.20	0.69	Agreed	2.37	0.95	Disagreed

9	Alcoholic or drug use	3.13	0.79	Agreed	2.85	0.98	Agreed
10	Absent or rejected father	3.13	0.61	Agreed	2.18	0.87	Disagreed
11	Acceptance of violence as a way of resolving conflicts	2.75	0.90	Agreed	2.96	0.78	Agreed
12	Association with peers who condone violence	2.60	0.67	Agreed	2.88	0.76	Agreed
	Cumulative Average	3.04	0.74		2.85	0.84	

Source: Computed from Fieldwork, 2020

Table 2, indicates that both principals and teachers agreed that Rigid gender roles and stereotypes, Socially constructed norms of masculinity and femininity, Societal discriminatory laws, Poverty/unemployment, Low socio-economic status, Depression, Alcoholic or drug use, Acceptance of violence as a way of resolving conflicts and Association with peers who condone violence are the factors that influence GBV on girls and women. While teachers disagreed that Education level, Young age and absent or rejected father factors do not influence GBV on girls and women. However, principals agreed that Education level, Young age and absent or rejected father factors are responsible for GBV on girls and women. This table also indicated that the cumulative total average mean of principals and teachers perception of factors responsible for GBV is 3.04 and 2.85 respectively.

Hypotheses 1: There is no significant difference between the perception of principals and teachers on the types of GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era.

Table 3: T-test Analysis of Principals and Teachers perception on the types of GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	t-Cal. value	t-Crit. value	Decision
Principals	40	29.75	4.01	138	0.456	1.96	Retained(Not Significant)
Teachers	100	29.30	5.7				

Source: Computed from Fieldwork, 2020

In table 3, t-calculated value of 0.456 was less than t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was therefore retained. Thus there is no significant difference between principals and teachers' perception on the types of GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the perception of principals and teachers on the factors that influence GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era.

Table 4: T-test Analysis of Principals and Teachers' perception on the factors that influence genders based violence among men and women during COVID-19 era.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	t-Cal. value	t-Crit. value	Decision
Principals	40	36.58	4.33	138	-0.097	1.96	Retained (Not Significant)
Teachers	100	36.71	8.33				

Source: Computed from Fieldwork, 2020

Table 4, shows that the t-calculated value of -0.097 was less than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted. This means that there is no significant difference between principals and teachers' perception on the factors that influence GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era.

Discussion of Results

This study answered two questions and tested two hypotheses on the perception of principals and teachers on GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era. The result in tables one and two revealed that principals and teachers agreed on the identified types and factors that influence GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era, however the teachers disagreed that Education level, Young age and absent or rejected father factors do not influence GBV on girls and women.

Hypothesis one in the study reveal the types of genders based violence among men and women during COVID-19 era to include Verbal abuse, Slap on the face or ear, Biting, Knife threat, Beaten up, Burning/Acid attack, Stabbing, Forced sexual intercourse and Gun threat as perceived by principals and teachers. This result showed that the principals and teachers perceive GBV from the same perspective. The plausible reason for these finding is that principals and teachers interact and share in young girls and women (students) experiences and fears being counselors by their profession. This finding confirms the existing studies of International Labour Organization (2020) and Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (2016) which also revealed the types of GBV among girls and women.

Hypothesis two showed the factors that influence GBV on girls and women during COVID-19 era to include Rigid gender roles and stereotypes, Socially constructed norms of masculinity and femininity, Societal discriminatory laws, Poverty/ unemployment, Low socio-economic status, Depression, Alcoholic or drug use, Acceptance of violence as a way of resolving conflicts and Association with peers who condone violence as perceived by principals and teachers. Both principals and teachers perceive the factors from the same perspective because they as managers and administrators they impact knowledge and skills on young girls and women who are most vulnerable to GBV in the society, thus understand their plight. This finding corroborates the existing studies of Heise (1998) and Sili (2020) which also revealed the factors that influence GBV on girls and women. That no one factor alone "influence" GBV on girls and women but rather that a number of factors combine to raise the likelihood that a particular man in a particular setting may act violently toward a woman.

Conclusion

This study focused on the perception of principals and teachers of secondary schools in Bayelsa State on GBV on girls and women during the COVID-19 era with regards to types, and factors that influence it. Based on the results of the study, there was no significant

difference between principals and teachers' perception of GBV on girls and women during the COVID-19 with regards to types and factors that influence it.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

1. School system should be used as a veritable instrument of stopping gender based violence (GBV) before it starts, through regular curricula, sexuality education, school counseling programs and school health services should be utilized to convey the message that violence is wrong and can be prevented, suggest alternative models of masculinity, teach conflict-resolution skills and provide assistance to children and adolescents who may be victims or perpetrators of violence.
2. Integrating GBV as a subject into psychology, sociology, medicine, nursing, law, women's studies, social work and other programs enables providers to identify and tend to this problem.
3. Intervention strategies through media campaigns, faith-based programs and services should be used as public enlightenment on GBV on girls and women.

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