Religious fundamentalism or Receptivity: Interrogating married women's reactionary behaviours to husbands in Nigeria

Okonkwo, Ifeoma Mary-Marvella, Lenshie, Nsemba Edward and Jacob, Patience Kondu

Department of Political Science and International Relations,
Taraba State University, Jalingo
Email: ifyvella@gmail.com

Abstract

Contrary to popular opinion that women typically are victims of domestic and intimate partner violence, the experiences in Nigeria reveals a surge in the number of reported cases where men are victims and women are perpetrators of these forms of violence. Previous gender related studies have concentrated on investigating violence against women in Nigeria, but there is a dearth of studies on male victimhood in Nigeria. The study adopted the case study research design for an in-depth study of the situation in Nigeria. The study anchored on the secondary method of data collection, published and unpublished documents including books, journals, the internet and newspapers were used. The study adopted the frustration-aggression theory. The study argues that the patriarchal culture expects men to be dominant figures in relationships and within the household but when they fail to conform to socio-religious and moral expectations, they become vulnerable to various forms of aggression and violence. The study, consequently, concludes that the violent attitude of women in Nigeria today is construed by the perceived victimization and marginalization in their familial relationships with their partners. Furthermore, in order to get a broader outlook on the phenomenon, this paper interrogates how religious morality and fundamentalism affects Nigerian women and propels their violent reactionary behaviours towards their husbands during family conflict.

Keywords: Domestic violence, Family conflict, Intimate partner violence, Religious fundamentalism and Violence against men.

Introduction

Nigeria is a country with deeply rooted cultural and religious leanings and practices. Religion and culture establish the main structure of the Nigerian environment, and they are connected with the general existence of Nigerians which includes social, political, and economic aspects. Mbiti (1999) observed that religion has pervaded all aspects of human life, to such an extent it has not been easy to separate man from it; for this reason, intimate partners in family settings have taken advantage of culture and religious entrenchments to abuse relationship. Since patriarchy characterizes a typical African society, women are subjected to men's birdcages (Abayomi & Kolawole, 2013). This situation is reinforced by religious rites in Christianity and Islam where submissiveness is an injunction for women

to their spouses or partners. This condition has been exploited by menfolk to not only subject women to submissiveness but to abuse and molest them. Religious fundamentalism has proven to be a principal force behind human development. Adherence is motivated by religious teachings, ethics and beliefs to develop spiritual qualities that empower fundamentalists to sacrifice for the comfort of others. Additionally, religious fundamentalism has come to be characterised by strict meticulousness as it is applied to certain specific scriptures, dogmas, or ideologies. For example, married women in Christianity cannot divorce or be divorced except on the grounds of infidelity, while in Islam men have the capacity of marrying up to four wives in possible successive order. Consequently, women have always been at the receiving end of guidelines and rules pertaining to marital relationships. They have at different instances suffered different forms of gender-based violence exploiting the femininity in women (British Council Nigeria, 2012).

Women in contemporary Nigeria with increasing knowledge of rights and responsibilities enshrined in the national and international statutory documents have in many ways been reacting to men's aviaries (Ezeani & Ezeibe, 2013; Gibbings, 2011). At several conventions' women have demanded expanded space in the family and the public space. At the level of the family, some women have taken the bold step to react to the forms of gender-based violence they continue to suffer in their respective homes (Bhulai & Nemr, 2016). In some societies, the fear of gender-based violence has motivated single-motherhood practice. In some other societies, women have reacted using instrument of violence to checkmate men's excesses in relationship with their partners. The transformation of women from victimhood reveals that femininity is not inferiority in the acts of violence, particularly against husbands who prey them for weakness in the family has not received academic attention. Consequently, this study contributes to extant literature on gender-based violence from the standpoint of married women reactionary behaviour to their husbands in Nigeria. The focus is to shift gender studies discourses which have concentrated on violence against women to interrogate men victimhood in Nigeria. What underlie this study is first to understand the motivations of married women to violence against their spouses, and secondly, to know how the society construe such reactionary behaviours of married women against their husbands in Nigeria.

Conceptualization of Terms

In this study, five concepts are pertinent to conceptualize. These concepts are domestic violence, intimate partner violence, violence against men, religious fundamentalism, and reactionary behaviour. These concepts are operationalized in the context which they are applied in the study.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is the victimization of a person with whom the abuser has or has had an intimate, romantic or spousal relationship. It consists of a pattern of coercive behaviour

used by a competent adult or adolescent (Burnett, 2018). More broadly put, domestic violence is referred to as a pattern of behaviour in which an intimate partner uses acts of sexual, physical, emotional, psychological violence and economic abuse to gain power unfairly, control or intimidate the other partner in the relationship (APA, 1996; Safe Horizon, 2007). It is also severe acts of violence such as beatings, slaps, shoves, maltreatment or a pattern of physical abusive patterns (Osthoff, 2002).

Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence is a type of interpersonal violence which occurs between individuals. According to Saltzman, Fanslow, McMahon & Shelley (1999) intimate partner violence takes into account acts of sexual violence, physical violence, emotional violence, psychological violence or pestering and stalking perpetuated by cohabiting partners or couples. Although controversy exists as to whether it also involves violence occurring between persons who are dating or who consider themselves a couple but live in separate domiciles. In this context, it is limited to a form of violence among married couples who live together.

Violence Against Men

Violence against men consists of acts that are exclusively committed against men by their intimate partners (Sugg, Thompson, Majuro & Rivara, 1999). Furthermore, violence against men can be described as any act of gender-based violence that resulted in, or was likely to result in, physical, sexual and psychological harm to men, or leading to coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in private or public life (Council of Europe, 2011).

Religious Fundamentalism

Religious fundamentalism is a discernible pattern of religious militancy by which self-styled 'true believers' attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity, fortify the borders of religious community, and create viable alternatives to secular institutions (Almond, Appleby & Sivan, 2003). Richard Antoun (2003) further defines fundamentalism as a religiously based cognitive and effective orientation to the world characterized by protests against change and the ideological orientation of modernity.

Reactionary Behaviour

Reactionary behaviour refers to aggressive behaviour evoked in response to real or perceived threat, provocation or frustration, and is typically impulsive, immediate, and directed towards the perceived perpetrator (Berkowitz, 1993). It occurs in absence of pre-planned intention, in contrast to proactive behaviour which is goal-directed or instrumental in nature (Dodge & Coie, 1987). Reactionary behaviour is usually accompanied by an act of remorse or confusion even though the act was committed consideration the consequences or harm to others is not considered by the actor (Barratt, Stanfords, Dowdy, Liebman & Kent, 1999).

Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on the frustration-aggression theory developed by John Dollard and his associates in 1939, but was expanded and modified by Yale (1962), drawing mainly from the psychological basis of motivation and behaviour. It provides explanation for violent behavioural disposition resulting from the inability of certain people to fulfil their human needs. It is based on the general premise that all humans have needs which they seek to fulfil and that any blockade to the fulfilment of these needs by individuals or group elicit violent responses.

Aggression is the natural outcome of frustration. In a situation where the legitimate desires of an individual or group is denied either directly or by the indirect consequence of the way a society is structured, the feeling of frustration can compel such persons or group to express their anger through violence that is directed at those perceived to be responsible for their misfortune or others who are indirectly related to those frustrating their expectations. The theory indicates that aggressive behaviour is not motivated by genuine hostility, but by frustration. All the discussions on the theory imply that "there is no smoke without fire" and that "an angry man is a hungry man (Ogege, 2013).

The relevance of this paper is hinged on the fact that the Frustration-aggression theory emphasizes the difference between what people feel, want and the discrepancy between what is sought and what they get. In the social construction of genders, behaviours are influenced by a range of factors including culture, sexual preference and religion. In Nigeria, feminity is emphasised based on compliance and accommodating the desires and interests of men and their hegemonic masculinity characterised by power and authority (Connell, 1987). The violent extent in the context of women's reactionary behaviour to men in their intimate relationships suggests that male domination of economic, social, religious and sexual life of women and the constellation of abuses like intimidation, aggression and controlling acts by men (Gondolf, 2002) has led women into actively rejecting, selecting and adapting dimensions that presumably make their lives better. Consequently, the difficulty placed on wives to achieve their personal goals by religious fundamentals translate into frustration with their husbands bring about the need to strike out in ways that range from tongue lashing to overt violence (Henslin, 1990). Expatiating further, in the face of these frustrated expectations, vulnerable wives are likely to embark on violent destructive behaviours or be a ready army to be used to cause crisis in their homes. Central to this explanation is that aggression is the natural outcome of frustration. As stated by Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer and Sears (1939) it is thus believed that infidelity, drunkenness, unfulfilled financial demands are some of the frustrating issues that often times confronts women which regrettably sometimes leads to violence against men.

Methodology

The methodology employed in carrying out this study is the case study research design for an in-depth study of the situation of religious fundamentalism, wife's reactionary violent behaviour towards husbands in Nigeria. For data collection purposes, the study employed secondary sources like unpublished and published documents including books, journals, the internet and newspapers. These were used in the study to review relevant literature to situate and clarify the subject of the study. Furthermore, the study anchored on the qualitative approach of data analysis by adopting content analysis technique in order to study recorded human communications as regards to the subject matter.

Findings of the Study

Nigeria's social milieu and the place of the female gender

The importance of family cannot be over emphasized as the most important institution through which the origin of human identity comes into existence. In Nigeria, the ideal family structure consists of a married man, woman and their children where the man is the financial head and the woman a home maker (Bradbury, 2005; Adams, 1997). Gender differentiation is well pronounced in patriarchal societies where a group of individuals have been tagged and groomed to be the decision makers for another group considered inferior, weak and subordinate (Gailey, 1987).

The invocation of cultural beliefs, values and the maintenance of the status quo have kept the decision-making group at the top. Unfortunately, in many societies, women are considered weak, while the men are the decision-makers. In traditional African societies like Nigeria, culture has a pervasive influence on how women are treated. The Culture Policy of Nigeria (1988), the official document regulating the administration of cultural matters, lends credence to the fact that culture represents the totality of the way of life of a given society. It is therefore no surprise that all discriminations against women tend to seek justification in cultural norms, beliefs and practices.

A critical analysis of girls' and women's condition in the family-hood reveals a lot of discrimination in this institution. The girl-child, in particular, experiences discrimination right from the womb. Over time, women discovered by traditional practitioners to be pregnant with baby girls are subjected to certain behavioural and food taboos in the family (Yao, 1998). In some traditional African societies, girls are deprived of even the simple right to existence in the minds of their fathers who are the family heads.

In the highly Islamic and patriarchal communities of Nigeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and so on, son-preference is dominant and detrimental to the girl in the family. When men are asked the number of children they have, the only count the sons, totally neglecting any daughters born to them. To these men, girls are not important because they belong to the female gender. They are therefore underrated in comparison with their

brothers who are given the right to existence by their fathers. Women in these types of societies accept these attitudes thereby accepting gender discrimination (Williams, 1995).

As primary educators of children of both sexes in the traditional African families, women socialize boys and girls to accept conditions exploiting females but gratifying males through the values they transmit. Boys then grow up with a superiority complex while girls are made to accept and internalize an inferior position in society. Although this form of socialization results in gender inequalities, it is considered by the family to be perfectly normal. Consequently, girls accept the dominating role attributed to men (boys) by society, become submissive to men and aim to fulfil social roles as wives and mothers, sometimes at rather early ages. Their education is therefore centred on their social and biological reproductive roles.

As social reproducers, girls are automatically educated to become the future caretakers of the family. Consequently, they are taught to appropriate the multiple roles their mothers play in the family. These roles range from food production and preparation to the transportation of water and fuel over long distances, as well as household chores like house-cleaning, laundry, taking care of household members and so on. This excessive workload which society imposes on girls, who work along with their mothers in the private sphere, deprives them of any potential they may have to participate in public life and explains their inhibition from playing leadership roles in society later on in life (Francis, 2000).

Instructions regarding girls' biological reproductive role focus on accepting marriage, pregnancy, birth and lactation as the very essence of female existence. When this role is successfully accomplished women and girls acquire prestige and high social status in their communities. These teachings serve to maintain the subordinate status of females. They also encourage polygyny, early marriage and early pregnancy: elements that accentuate gender inequalities and create reproductive health problems.

In some African communities, girls are considered transitory members of their families because the ultimate aim of their parents is to marry them off obligatorily into other families. Male family members exploit the transitory nature of girls in their birth-homes to argue that they are not valuable to their birth families. This attitude hampers girls' right to protection by their families and makes them uncomfortable therein. It also creates a constraint to sound psychological development of girls and reinforces gender discrimination.

In many parts of Africa, women and girls have no inheritance rights. This is a typical practice in the Eastern part of Nigeria where women are excluded from inheriting their parents' properties along with the male children (LEDAP, 2003). Even where legal provisions exist, they are not effectively applied. Consequently, married women for example, cannot inherit land or any property from their deceased husbands. Widows are thus left destitute or are passed on to their surviving brothers- in-law. This perpetuates the levirate tradition, a flagrant type of gender discrimination imposed on vulnerable women

with little choice or options. From the preceding, it is clear that, through the family, girls are socialized to perpetuate socially and culturally sanctioned gender rules made and imposed by men.

In African societies, girls are born into discrimination and it follows them throughout their lives, depriving them of their basic rights as full citizens. Even their citizenship is questioned: if girls are not full members of their family how can they be full citizens of their country? Being usually isolated in the private sphere of life, their self-development is severely hampered as they lack access to information on their different rights. They therefore grow into womanhood nourishing an inferiority complex irrespective of the international laws liberating them from such discrimination. In addition, they are prevented from participating fully in the developmental and decision-making processes of their countries because they can hardly bring themselves out as main actors in the public sphere. Formal education could perhaps be a way out for girls to move from the private to the public sphere of life.

The situation is the same in many communities in Nigeria, even when the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender, customary and religious laws continue to restrict women's rights. As Nigeria is a federal republic, each state has the authority to draft its own legislation. However, any law which is contradictory to Federal Law or the Constitution can be challenged in a Federal Court and cannot subsist. The combination of federation and a tripartite system of civil, customary and religious law makes it very difficult to harmonize legislation and remove discriminatory measures. Moreover, certain states in the north follow Islamic (Sharia) law, although not exclusively and only in instances where Muslims make use of Islamic courts. Adherence to Islamic law reinforces customs that are unfavourable to women, including those relating to freedom of movement, and to marriage and inheritance (Human Rights Watch, 1999).

As of 2006, the Abolition of all Forms of Discrimination against Women in Nigeria and other Related Matters Bill' was under consideration; it is unclear whether this has been transmitted into law. Nigeria ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. By becoming a signatory to international instruments on elimination of violence against women, the government of Nigeria was committed to changing any laws and practices that did not fulfil the rights agreed upon and expressed in these documents. This includes changing all laws (statutory, customary or religious), practices and policies that discriminate against women or fail to protect women from violence (Baobab Legal Literacy Leaflet No. 1). Many of our societies, in spite of great leaps and strides of global community which have rightly buried such conceptions of the second fiddle place of the woman, have not succeeded in rising from this perception. They still see women from the prism of commodity of use. Till today, there are still communities in Nigeria which see a woman as subservient to man, in mental and biological capacity, this is why in spite of conspicuous huge achievements of women in the globe and phenomenal rise of the role women play in the world, gender sensitivity or perception of

women having mental equality to man has remained unappreciated. The structuring of family-hood in the pattern that affects female gender negatively has become unacceptable among women. In many circumstances, such derogatory position of women to men in the society has been considered a major factor motivating violence against them. This is reinforced by the pattern in which women are socialized in the society, and it is also consequently, a contributing factor responsible for domestic violence in Nigeria.

Gender socialization and domestic/gender-based violence

Gender is different from sex. According to Oakley (1972), gender parallels the biological division of sex into male and female, but involves the division and social valuation of masculinity and femininity. Gender is socially established with customary roles and responsibilities given to either girl or boy, woman or man. Consequently, perceptions of gender are deeply rooted; vary widely both within and between cultures, and change overtime making gender the determinant of power and resources for males and females (Adams, 2016). In other words, the social construction of gender is demonstrated by the fact that individuals, groups and societies ascribe particular traits, statuses, or values to individuals purely because of their sex, yet these ascriptions differ across societies and cultures, and over time within the same society (Colley, Nash, O'Donnell & Restorick, 1987).

In Nigerian culture, gender is shaped by the countries patriarchal nature. Consequently, gender identities and gender relations are critical aspects of the Nigerian culture because they shape the way daily life is lived in the family. Through the gender socialization process, children are taught what is expected and accepted of them as girl or boy practically from birth till they become adults. The distinction between men and women is demonstrated with the expectation that women must be obedient, caring, kind and appreciative while males are rewarded when they display aggression, decisiveness and detachment (Rinehart & Kols, 1988). Nigerian men have been in control of political, economic as well as social spheres of life for years. They have been able to utilize the opportunity to their advantage and this does not give women opportunities. Every patriarchal society sets restrictive parameters on women's activities, creating a social structure that promotes and condones domestic violence, sexual violence and sexual objectification of women (Salaam, 2003).

The common assumption is that women should be more naturally nurturing than men, meaning that physically abusive wives are more likely to be targeted by socio-cultural and religious beliefs and more recently research than are their male counterparts. Due to this, the generally believed myth of women as solely victims of domestic violence has been debunked. Women are now being exposed as perpetrators of domestic violence in which they use a mix of physical and coercive behaviours designed to manipulate and dominate another competent adult or adolescent to achieve compliance and dependence (Kerr, Levine & Woolard, 2007).

The term *intimate partner violence* (IPV) is often used synonymously with domestic violence. Other terms have included *wife beating*, *wife battering*, *man beating*, *husband battering*, *relationship violence*, *domestic abuse*, *spousal abuse*, and *family violence* with some legal jurisdictions having specific definitions (Campbell, 2002; Dienye & Gbeneol, 2009). Acknowledging the abuses suffered by women, it poses a challenge to feminist scholars who publicize and oppose women's victimization. Consequently, some feminists still maintain that the violent attitude of women in Nigeria today towards their husbands is construed by the perceived victimization and marginalization experienced in their familial relationships with their partners.

Perspectives on married women reactionary behaviour and intimate partner violence

Married women in Nigeria as their counterpart elsewhere have become tied of the allusion that marriage is "till death do you part" as in Christian religious context (Akintola, 2018). Among married Muslim women, the concept of the husband marrying more than one wife is now being questioned by practising Muslim women through their reactionary attitudes to their husbands. Because of the situation associated with the behavioural dynamics of married women in recent times in Nigeria, marriage in both Christianity and Islam has generated public attention and discourse as grey literature are awash with the incidences of violence of women directed at men. Reflecting on the principle of marriage in the religious context, Akintola (2018) stated that:

> Marriage in many religions is 'Till death do us part'. Death being referred to is the natural death; old age or unfortunate accident. But some spouses these days are reinventing the wheel and taking matters into their own hands. If natural death is not coming soon enough, they come in to give the grim reaper a hand. In recent times, the numbers of death by spouse have been on the rise, such that it is difficult for couples to sleep with both eyes closed. Though the issue of spouses killing one another is not new in Nigeria, it has however increased drastically in recent times. Not even the threat of jail terms or the fact that a killer will also be killed has reduced the tide.

> (https://www.independent.ng/death-by-spouse-cases-on-the-increase/).

The foregoing alludes to the fact that killing of spouses has increasingly become common in Nigeria. For most women, considering the challenges they have continued to face in many homes, holding to religious tenets with regards to marriage rites or principles is unnecessary. The reason is women have had harsh treatments and life-threatening experiences or violence leading to death from their husbands, and the legal system in Nigeria has not help matters.

Bazza (2009, p.176) painted the challenges of women generally with the Nigerian legal system, thus:

> Nigerian law and custom categorise a woman as an object who is not quite human. Gender-based violence is perhaps one of the most terrifying illustrations of inequality between male and female. Women are more at risk from violence than men in all sectors of the society. This is because of the differential access to prestige, power, control of materials resources, freedom to obtain knowledge and other basic needs of life among the gender.

Due to these concerns women have in recent times become self-conscious defying religious tenets that makes them receptive to engage in self-expression by whatever means possible. Because of the negative experiences associated with marital relationships, women have also resorted to violence as an instrument of self-expression against their husbands. Consequently, many of the women's reactions have had far-reaching effects, including death of their male partners (Table 1).

Table 1. Some selected cases of women's incidence of violence against husbands, 2012-2020

Date/Year	Location of violence	Incidence of violence	Verdict
6th August, 2012	Delta State	Mrs Mary Attah (28 years old) for stabbing her Pastor-husband, Mr. Darlington Attah to death over phone call from a lover. She later set him ablaze.	Convicted and sentenced to death by hanging.
4th August, 2014	Gezawa, Kano State	Mrs Wasila Tasi'u (15 year old) allegedly murdered her husband, Umar Sani (35-year-old) with rat poison.	The charges against her were dropped over claim of her being a victim of abuse. She turned 14 year old when she was married to Sani.
4th February, 2015	Yenagoa, Bayelsa State	Mrs Victoria Gagariga murdered her husband Mr. Henry Gagariga	Convicted and sentenced to death by hanging in 2018
2nd February, 2016	Adeniyi layout, Abidi-Odan, Akobo, Ibadan home.	Mrs Yewande Oyediran knifed her husband, Mr Lowo Oyediran to death	Convicted and sentenced to 7 years imprisonment on the 27th of November, 2017
20th August, 2017	Kosoko Street in Ayetoro area, Oto-Awori Local Government Area, Lagos State.	Mrs Folashade Idoko (23 year old) murdered her husband Mr. Lawrence Idoko (33 year old) to death.	Remanded in Kirikiri Maximum Prison, Lagos.
18th November, 2017	Wuse 2, Abuja	Mrs Maryam Sanda stabbed her husband Haliru Bello Bilyaminu to death	Arrested November 2017 and sentenced to death by hanging on the 27th January 2020

3rd May, 2018	Diamond estate, Sangotedo, Lagos State.	Barr. Udeme Otike-Odibi (47 year old) stabbed her husband, Barr. Otike Odubi (50 year old) to death and severed his penis over disagreement on a child in his previous marriage. She also stabbed herself, but survived after treatment at the hospital.	Remanded in Kirikiri Maximum Prison, Lagos.
20th February, 2019	Dorayi Quarters, Gwale, Kano State.	Mrs Rashida Sa'idu (31 years old) threw her husband, Adamu Ali, from a storey building following a suspicious phone call, leading to his death.	Convicted and sentenced to death on 21st of February, 2020
29th January, 2020	Danjanku village, Malumfashi local government area of Katsina State.	Mrs Rabi Rabiu (19 years) stabbed with a knife her husband, Mr. Shamsudeen Salisu (25 years) to death.	Still awaiting sentence.
1st July, 2020	Jalingo, Taraba State	Mrs Halima Umar in the early hours of the morning cut off the manhood of her husband based on information that he was in a relationship with another woman and engaged to her.	Has been arrested by the Taraba State police command and awaiting trial and sentencing.

Source: Authors' compilation.

The presentation in Table 1 is not exhaustive of cases of violence of married women directed at their husbands. According to Leonard (2003), it is difficult to establish reliable estimates of male victims of domestic violence because few men are willing to admit that they are being abused and therefore do not seek professional help. In Nigeria, the reasons for domestic violence have been identified to include drunkenness, infidelity and financial misappropriation (Ilika, Okonkwo & Adogu, 2002).

While focusing on gender violence from the standpoint of women reactionary behaviour, George and Yarwood (2004) and Du Plat-Jones (2006) stated that the forms of violence experienced by men from their partners include stabbing, injuries to genitals, burns, verbal abuse, emotional violence and psychological cruelty. Oti, Paul and Duru (2017) posit that the issue has become a national concern, given that it has occupied media discourse in recent time. Awash with several media reports, the incidence of spousal killings and attacks reveals that men are the victims and women are the perpetrators of violence.

The case of spousal killings or attacks, especially by women was not well-known in traditional African societies, like Nigeria. The incidence is on the rise, gradually eroding systematic family values where it has been a "man's world" throughout societies in Africa. The perception of married women who violently engage their husbands is construed by social and political forces external to the practice in societies in Nigeria. The much sermonise social and political consciousness of women in the Western societies through

the instrumentality of globalisation and international legislations promoting women's rights reinforces such reactionary behaviours. The awareness among women reflects that the religious, cultural and traditional tenets and practices to which they have years respected constitute for many women bondage to self-expression and exercise of freedom. Consequently, it requires a drastic systemic change that promotes a sense of coequals, fidelity and social responsibilities in marital relationships in Nigeria and Africa generally.

Conclusion

The Nigerian religious culture has been an influential force towards societal balance but despite this influence, women have experienced improvements as regards to gender equality through the re-interpretation of religious texts that has created powerful opportunities for cooperation rather than conflict. Notwithstanding this, the pressure of domination in family settings still affects women lives leading to frustration and then aggression towards their partners. The cases of domestic violence against men where women are perpetrators and men are victims are often ignored by society. Male victims of domestic violence deserve the same recognition, sympathy, support, and services as do female victims. Because of the taboo nature of violence against men, victims may be reluctant to report incidents of domestic violence for fear of being rejected, humiliated and ridiculed by security officials, religious leaders, civil society organizations that fight against domestic violence because often times they do not have the training to deal with or support male victims appropriately. Divergent motives like religious fundamentalism were discovered from the study to be responsible for the frustration and aggression of women, leading to battering of men by their intimate partners in Nigeria.

Recommendations

i. Religious and customary systems that reinforce the notion of dependence and receptivity among married women to husbands in Nigeria should be moderated or changed by Islamic and Christian bodies; and customary legal systems to expand the social space for women and specifically, married women in the legal and social system to have rights to challenge behaviour that tends to undermine a profitable marital relationship in Nigeria and beyond.

ii. To avoid reactionary behaviours by women (wives), men (husbands) should understand that interpersonal conflict can sometimes escalate into violence therefore, it is important that they learn and inculcate appropriate conflict handling mechanisms to avoid violent conflict.

iii. Human rights organizations and religious organizations with strong backing from the Nigerian government should facilitate activities in managing violence against either men or women. Such backing should be in form of enforcing laws that prohibit violence all in the bid to promote gender equality.

iv. Men who are victims of violence should be encouraged to report incidences of violence to law enforcement agencies. They should have adequate access to legal representation and opportunities to pursue justice against their violators.

References

Abayomi, A.A. & Kolawole, T.O. (2013). Domestic Violence and Death: Women as Endangered Gender in Nigeria. *American Journal of Sociological Research* 3(3); 53-60. DOI: 10.5923/j.sociology.20130303.01.

Adams, M. L. (1997). *The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality*. Toronto: University of Toronto.

Adams, R. (2016). Gender and Development in Nigeria; Issues and Challenges. *WOREC Journal of Gender Studies*. 1(1); 18-24.

Akintola, L. (2018). Death by spouse cases on the increase. *Independent Saturday*. August 18. https://www.independent.ng/death-by-spouse-cases-on-the-increase/.

Almond, G., Appleby, R., & Sivan, E. (2003). *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalism around the World*. Bibliovault OAI Repository. University of Chicago Press

American Psychological Association (1996). apa.org/topics/violence/index.aspx (assessed 16th December, 2014)

Annan-Yao, E. (1998a). *Women Education and Population Growth in Africa,* ESP 27, Imprimerie, Souvenir, Abidjan: ADB.

Antoun, R. T. (2003). Understanding Fundamentalism: Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Movements. Middle East Quarterly. Winter 2003. 10(1): 192

Baobab Legal Literacy Leaflet, No. 1 (http://iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/against20violence20against20women_baobab.doc) [Accessed 1st March, 2015]

Barratt, E.S., Stanford, M.S., Dowdy, L., Liebman, M.J. & Kent, T.A. (1999). Impulsive and premeditated aggression: A factor analysis of self-reported acts. *Psychology research*.86(2):163-78.10.1016/S0165-1781(99)00024-4. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/12902695_Impulsive_and_premeditated_agg es   sion_A_factor_analysis_of_self-_reported_acts assessed 5th March, 2020

Bazza, H. I. (2010). Domestic Violence and Women's Rights in Nigeria. *Societies Without Borders* 4 (2): 175-192. https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/swb/vol4/iss2/6.

Berkowitz, L. (1963). Aggression: A Sociological Analysis New York: Mc Graw-Hill

Bhulai, R.A.P. & Nemr, C. (2016). From Policy to Action: Advancing an Integrated Approach to Women and Countering Violent Extremism. New York: Global Centre on Cooperative Security.

Bradbury, B. (2005). "Social, Economic and Cultural Origins of Contemporary Families," in Maureen Baker (ed.) Families: Changing Trends in Canada, 5th edition. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 69-98.

British Council Nigeria (2012). *Gender in Nigeria Report 2012: Improving the Lives of Girls and Women in Nigeria.* A publication of the British Council Nigeria.

Burnett, L.B. (2018). *Domestic Violence*. https://emedicine.medscape.com/article/805546-overview (assessed 15th March, 2020)

Campbell, J.C. (2002). Health consequences of intimate partner violence. *Lancet,* 59; 1331-1336.

Colley, A., Nash, J., O'Donnell, L. & Restorick, L. (1987). Attitudes to the female sex role and sex-typing of physical activities. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 18; 19-29.

Connell, R. (1987). *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*. Sydney, Allen & Unwin; Cambridge, Polity Press; Stanford, Stanford University Press.

Council of Europe (2011). Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, Chapter1 – purposes, definitions, equality and non – discrimination, general obligations, pg.8.

Cultural Policy for Nigeria. (1988).

Dienye, P.O. & Gbeneol, P.K. (2009). Domestic Violence Against Men in Primary Care in Nigeria. *American Journal of Men's Health* 3(4); 333–339

Dodge, K.A. & Coie, J.D. (1987). Social information-processing factors in reactive and proactive aggression in children's peer groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 53; 389-409

Dollard, J., Miller, N., Doob, L., Mowrer, O. & Sears, R. (1939). Frustration and Aggression. New Haven, CT, US, Yale University Press

Du Plat-Jones, J. (2006). Domestic violence: the role of health professionals. *Nursing Standard* (Royal College of Nursing (Great Britain): 1987). 21; 44-8. 10.7748/ns2006.12.21.14.44.c6392.

Ezeani, E.O. & Ezeibe, C.C. (2013). Gender and Democracy in Nigeria: A Critical Analysis

 of Women Participation in the Federal Legislature. *Journal of Gender Information and Development in Africa,* 2(1&2); 77-102.

Francis, B. (2000). Is gender a social construct or a biological imperative? Family Futures:

Issues in Research and Policy. 7ᵗʰ Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference.http://www.aifs.gov.au/conferences/aifs7/francis.html (assessed 10 June 2020).

Gailey, C. W. (1987). Evolutionary perspectives of Gender Hierarchy in Analyzing Gender. In:Hess, B. B. & Ferree, M. M. (eds.) Analyzing Gender. A Handbook of Social Science. California: Sage Publications, Inc.

George, M.J. & Yarwood, D.J. (2004). Male Domestic Violence Victims Survey 2001. Main Findings. Dewar Research. October 2004. www.dewar4research.org/DOCS/mdv.pdf (assessed 2nd June 2020)

Gibbings, S.L. (2011). No Angry Women at the United Nations: Political Dreams and the Cultural Politics of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 13 (4); 522-538.

Gondolf, E. (2002). *Batterer intervention systems: Issues, outcomes, and recommendations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Human Rights Watch (1999) https://www.hrw.org/topic/womens-rights assessed 5th March 2020

Henslin, J.M. (1990). *Social Problems.* 2nd ed. Englewoods Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall

Ilika, A.L., Okonkwo, P.I. & Adogu, P. (2002). Intimate partner violence among women of childbearing age in a primary health care centre in Nigeria. *African Journal of Reproductive Health,* 6; 53-58.

Kerr, H., Levine, D. & Woolard, B. (2007). *Domestic violence*. Lansing, MI: Society for Academic Emergency Medicine. Assessed March 15, 2020 http://www.saem.org/inform/domviol.html

Legal Defense and Assistance Project: LEDAP. (2003). Domestic Violence: Zero tolerance, Lagos. pp.VII [Accessed 4th August, 2014]

Leonard, J. (2003). The hidden victims of domestic violence. *Victimology.* 7, July, 1-22.

Mbiti, J.S. (1999). *African Religions and Philosophy*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Heinemann.

Oakley, A. (1972): *Sex, Gender and Society*. London: Maurice, Temple and Smith Pearsons.

Ogege, S.O. (2013). Insecurity and Sustainable Development: The Boko Haram Debacle in Nigeria. *American International Journal of Social Science*. 2(7); 82-88.

Osthoff, S. (2002). But, Gertrude, I Beg to Differ, a Hit is Not a Hit: When Battered Women Are Arrested for Assaulting Their Partners. *Violence Against Women*. 8; 1521-1544. 10.1177/107780102237968. (Assessed 1st March, 2020).

Oti, B., Paul, S. and Duru, T. (2017). The emerging trend in culture of domestic violence in

Nigeria: causes, theoretical assumptions and implications. *Research Journal of Humanities, Legal Studies and International Development,* 2(1); 53-63.

Rinehart, W. & Kols, A. (1988). Women and Development. *Journal of personnel work*, 2(1), 24.

Safe Horizon N.Y.C. (2007). Introducing a Child Focus into a Batterer Program Curriculum: Does an Emphasis on Children Improve the Response? Report submitted to the U.S Department of Justice

Salaam, T. (2003): *A Brief Analysis on The Situation of Women in Nigeria Today.* DSM

Saltzman, L.E., Fanslow J.L., McMahon P.M., & Shelley G.A. (1999). Intimate Partner Violence Surveillance: *Uniform Definitions and Recommended Data Elements*, Atlanta:

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Sugg, N. K., Thompson, R. S., Thompson, D. C., Majuro, R., & Rivara, F. P. (1999). Domestic violence and primary care attitudes, practices, and beliefs. *Archives of Family Medicine,* 8; 301-306.

Williams, C. (1995). *Still a Man's World: Men Who Do 'Women's Work'.* Berkley: University of California Press.