

**THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND IT'S  
EFFECTS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

**ILIM, MOSES M & AMALI SULEIMAN**

Department of Sociology,  
Federal University Dutsinma, Katsina State  
milim@fudutsinma.edu.ng, samali@fudutsinma.edu.ng

**&**

**ABDULGANIYU ABOLORE ISSA**

College of ICT, Kwara State University, Malete  
abdulganiyu.issa@kwasu.edu.ng

**Abstract**

*We live in a world where majority of women face real-time poverty, gross inequality, molestation and injustice. From poor education to poor nutrition to violence and brutalization to vulnerable and low pay employment, the sequence of discrimination and atrocities against women have continued to be perceived as normal in most societies in Nigeria. It is however important to stress her that persistent violence against women have a detrimental impact to the sustainable development of a society. This work is thus an attempt to explore the negative relationship between violence against women and sustainable development. The radical feminism was thus used to provide theoretical justification to the study. The paper concluded that no meaningful development could be sustained in Nigeria except women are regarded as partners in progress rather competitors. It is the recommendation of the paper that men and indeed the entire public must be educated and re-socialised on the need to view violence against women in negative terms in order to reduce its nature and extent and hence progress.*

**Key words:** Women, Violence, Gender, Sustainable Development, Victims

**Introduction**

Violence against women, not until the 1980s was not considered an issue worthy of attention or concern. Victims suffered in silence with little or no public recognition of their plight. This however, began to change as women organization around the world later embraced gender violence as an issue of priority both locally and internationally, and started demanding attention to the physical, psychological and economic abuse of women. Violence against women is the most pervasive yet under-recognized human rights violation in the world (Ellasberg and Heisse, 2005).

Violence against women is a profound health problem that saps women's energy, compromises their physical health and erodes their self-esteem. UNICEF (2001), confirmed that, 60 million women have died from violence related cases worldwide and out of which, 16 million are Nigerians. Unless actively challenge and diligently resisted, the nation that women are second class citizens continue to gain currency in most societies. Based on the above notion, social institutions in almost every society in the world legitimize, obscure and deny abuse women, (Zasha in Angya 2005). He continued that due to this, women become exposed to different forms of vulnerabilities. These include issues of right, disenfranchisement, and cruel traditional

practices such as widowhood, female genital mutilation and other abuse that strips women off their fundamental rights. Violence against women constitutes one of the manifestations of this general tendency towards women.

In Nigeria, violence against women perpetuates male power, control and dominance over females. It cuts across boundaries of culture, profession, education, income and age. (Enwereji in Yakubu 2007). In most cultures of Nigerian society, to beat a wife for the purpose of correction, discipline or chastisement is allowed, and women accept this as part of marital relationship. This phenomenon in most society is entrenched in the tradition and further sanctioned by the legal system

Violence against women thus occur anywhere, on the street, at work place, in the kitchen, bedroom etc. Men therefore always feel they have the right to control their wives behaviours and that, women who challenges that right by even asking for household money be disciplined by the use of force. It is in pursuance of this dominance that in many societies children learn from tradition and cultural beliefs that males are dominant and that violence is an acceptable means of asserting power and resolving conflict. Women as mothers or mother-in laws have unwittingly perpetuated violence by socializing girls and daughter-in-law to accept male dominance and to submit to their demands at all times.

Generally, some abused women resist, other flee and majority attempt to keep peace by submitting to their husbands/partners wishes. In Africa and indeed Nigeria, women who suffer abuse do not mention it or report it to the law enforcement agency for any action. In a survey by Dosunmu (2001), it was revealed that most female students who are raped or sexually harassed, never told anyone about their ordeal for fear of social stigma. Although women choose to suffer in silence, the effects of violence against them are not often silenced.

The federal ministry of health 1999, report also gathered that, due to violent act of female genital cutting for instance, there are 400,000 cases of Visco Vaginal Fistula (VVF), i.e. up to 10,000 cases annually, and this translates to 2 cases per 1000 deliveries in sub-Saharan Africa. In a similar study, Enwereji (1999), cited in Yakubu et al (2001), confirmed that 57% of women who attended social welfare clinic in Enugu state are those who experienced interpersonal violence with their spouses. Bukky, (Sunday tribune, 2002:24), further maintained that women who are abused by men suffer in silence, alone, locked in with their secrets and sometimes made to feel responsible for the attacks and too ashamed to reveal their predicament. They believe, "*their dirty linen should not be washed in the open*", hence most of them prefer to die in silence.

Both intimate partner violence and forced violence are common occurrences in Nigeria. They manifest in different forms such as wife battering, female genital cutting, emotional abuses, physical abuse, stalking, and other forms of harmful traditional practices such as early marriage, sexual abuse and marital rape. According to Aliegba (2005), violence against women is perpetuated by tradition and cultural beliefs and handed down from generation to generation, thus making it difficult for women to break away from the web.

The point therefore is that, violence against women is a peculiar kind of violence. It is different from all other forms of domestic violence, in the sense that it is targeted at women because of the inequality of positions or status of men and women in the society. Okpeh (2005:19), say it straddles a wide range of disadvantages that women suffer because of their peripheral positions in cross-gender power matrix.

## Conceptual Clarification

**Violence against Women:** The concept women refer to adult females, or females who are married and have stayed more than five years in their marital home. While violence against women maybe conceive as any type of harmful behaviour directed towards women because of her sex as woman. Similarly, the UN Economic and Social council (1992) see violence against women as “Any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private.

**Sustainable development:** This has to do with progress that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. (Oxford University Press, 1987). Sustainable development suggests that meeting the needs of the future depends on how well we balance social, economic and environmental objectives. It simply has to do with maintaining the structures and statusquo for posterity.

## Theoretical Framework

Radical feminism is the theoretical thrust of this paper. At the heart of radical feminism is the assumption that, men are responsible for and benefit from abuse and exploitation of women. Bryson in Haralambos and Holborn (2004), revealed that radical feminists see women as an oppressed group who have to struggle for their own liberation against their oppressors, men.

The concept of patriarchy, the systematic domination of women by men is a central concern of this theory and is seen as the root cause of violence against women in the society. Men are thus seen as the ruling class and women the subject class. Men therefore use their power to subdue women. Clogel, Collins, and chiaftez in Hugh et al (2002), thus see the cause and motivation behind violence against women as being derived from the economic exploitation of women’s labour.

The nature and extent of gender based violence according to radical feminism therefore lies on the ideology of patriarchy which defines the character, form and the nature of abuse towards women. Although radical feminists differ in their interpretation of the concept of patriarchy, most of the women’s right involves the appropriation of women’s beliefs and sexuality in some form. This led some feminist writers to assume that family is a key institution of oppressing women in modern societies. Firestone in Giddens (2003:115), for example argues that men are known for controlling women’s role in reproduction and child rearing. And because women are biologically able to give birth to children, they become dependent materially and otherwise on men.

Other feminists point to male violence as central to male supremacy. According to such views, rape, sexual harassment, non-verbal communication, interaction in daily life, pattern of listening and interrupting women’s sense of comfort in public place, all are a reflection of the nature and extent of abuse against women. That even the popular conception of beauty and sexuality (slim beauty for example), imposed by men on women in order to produce a certain type of femininity is aim at perpetuating women’s subordination through sexual exploitation hence women are seen as sexual object. By implication, radical feminism is of the view that women subordination is institutionally structured and culturally rationalized, exposing women to conditions of differences, dependency, powerlessness and poverty (Nader cited in Hugh et al). The theory thus view concepts like patriarchy and other negative behaviours directed

at women as adversely affecting women. That violence strips women off their right and reduces them to second class citizens, as well as saps their energy for any meaningful progress.

Despite the adverse effects, radical feminism can be eradicated through revolutionary change of society's structure because patriarchy they say is a systemic phenomenon. The solution to violence against women according to radical feminists can only be achieved by overthrowing the patriarchal order via revolutionary change. This theory has thus been given kudos for drawing widespread attention to the many linked dimension of oppression and violence against women through its emphasis on male violence and objectification of women.

Similarly, it reveals that the cause of gender based violence is multi-dimensional and cut across several factors. It also focuses on men, the main actors of violence and exploitation of women in the society. Apart from being conceptually significant as a methodological tool for analyzing violence against women, radical feminism is multi-dimensional in its approach based on its ability to combine patriarchy, ideology and social structure to analyze social phenomenon.

### **Causes of Violence against Women**

There is no single factor to account for the phenomenon of violence against women. Several complex and inter-connected, institutionalized and socio-cultural factors have combined to keep women vulnerable to incidences of gender based violence. Enwereji (2007) identified negligence of family responsibility, mismanagement of family income and barrenness as causes of violence against women. Again, the phenomenon of violence in some societies is rooted in sexual promiscuity.

However, based on the report of United Nations Development Survey in Hodges (2001), the causes of violence against women can broadly be classified as follows.

### **Economic Related Factors**

In an environment of widespread object poverty, material concerns tend to lead to an atmosphere of tension and general nervousness, which can easily spill over to physical violence (Hodges; 2001). He further argued that, over the last 15 years, there has been a gradual build-up of the culture of violence in Nigeria due to widespread poverty. Material concerns thus have the tendency of translating into violence. This is due to the collapse of the economy and subsequent low earnings. Many Nigeria homes find it difficult to make ends meet. Often, school fees, rent-age and other strategic bills to keep home together cannot be paid by the supposed bread winner of the family. The general collapse in real wages, hyper-inflation and increase frustration due to loss of jobs or elections and exacerbated competition over lean family resources is are strong determinants of violence between spouses. The situation could be worse in polygamous families given its large size; resulting to an attendant widening gap between means and contending needs of family members.

The implication is that, men fail to provide adequate funds for family needs and consequently, women remain at the receiving end of every single offence. Supporting this position, Odey (2005:84) argued that men thus look at women as Adam did to Eve in the Garden of Eden to be the cause of his sorrow for taking the forbidden fruit. This has been the root cause of abuse most women experience especially in some low income families.

### **Socio-Cultural Related Factors**

High among these factors is the idea of patriarchy and gender inequality, it is now a common thing for a man to beat up his wife and not vice-versa. It is always an abomination for a wife to raise her eyebrow not to talk of raising her fist over a man. This tradition is further reinforced by social-psychologist attitudes which are difficult to change, and these are reflected in the way and manner in which men/husbands that possess very poor impulse control and mal-handle their wives and partners when they are provoked. This means that, a little act of provocation could result to severe wife battering. But more importantly, the sex role and attitude of men or their masculinity and authority which is derived from the patriarchal arrangement of the society is one of the most important cultural related factors that influences violence against women.

Widow-inheritance is another socio-cultural related factor that stimulates gender based violence. Among the Ibos for example, a woman whose husband dies is expected to be inherited by the immediate surviving brothers of her late husband. This include taking over the widow, her properties and all her children. Enwereji (2007), said that the implication of this, and how it stimulates violence is that a women who for example enjoys socio-economic advantage over the man may feel reluctant to be subservient to the man or his relations, thus may risk being subdued through violence. Nwogu in Yakubu et al (2007), on the other hand observed that the widow may in some instances allow the surviving brother of her late husband to inherit her and even be submissive to him but the uncooperative attitude of his legitimate wife towards the affair could result to constant conflict and emotional or psychological outburst.

### **Legal Related factors**

The Nigerian legal system has certainly not done enough to protect the women against violence. The established legal norms are either too loose, ambiguous or the law enforcement agents display unprofessionalism in handling cases of abuse against women. Rape victims for example rarely receive any sympathy or attention from the police. There is always an assumption on the part of the police that domestic violence in particular and gender based violence, in general is a family and personal problem, and getting involve in family or personal matter is a waste of time (Hodges: 2001).

Similarly in his work, Genyi (2005:67), exposed the poverty of the Nigerian legal system at protecting the Nigerian women from incidence of abuse.

Commenting further, Shija and Agbadi in Angya (2005) noted that the law even fail to provide a criteria for measuring hurt that are grievous and it view women as incapable of expressing their will. In addition, the inclusion of the term “women (wives)” in the legal system of Nigeria suggests that women are to some degree less than humans and thus can be dehumanized. The phenomenon of gender-based violence is therefore stimulated, sustained and perpetuated by tradition, customs, cultural values and the state through its agencies.

### **The Nature and Extent of Violence against Women**

**Battering/physical Abuse:** This can take variety of forms such as slapping, kicking, chocking, punching, biting or using weapon or other objects to threatened or actually injure a woman. Most cultures reinforce acts of aggression in males and this makes them feel that the appropriate group for attack is the female group. UN report cited in Yakubu ed (2007), confirmed that 17% -38% of women in Thailand are physically attacked annually. Also Koze (1999), in his study of 790 respondents in Japan confirmed that, as high as 77% of the women suffered physical and emotional abuse. UNICEF (2007), again revealed that in Germany, 4 million women are battered yearly. In the United States of America, Hesse (2005), reported

that 28% of women representing a national sample reported at list one episode of physical violence by their partners between 2002-2006.

**Sexual Abuse and Rape:** For many women and girls (especially Africans), sexual coercion and abuse have become defining features of their lives. Forced sexual contact can take place anytime (especially during wars and communal conflicts) and includes a range of behaviours from forcible rape to nonphysical form of pressure that compel women and children to engage in sex against their will. (Heisse and Ellsber, 2005). The important thing to note about coercion is that women lack choice and thus face severe physical, social or economic consequences if they resist sexual advances. Similarly, Utulu and Utulu, (2005:46), reported in their study that freedom of sexual expression in the family was protective against violence and those women who reported not being privileged to express themselves sexually were at 95% risk of all other forms of abuse in the home. The study further revealed that when women take decision on matters regarding sexual intercourse the risk of violence was reduced.

The nature and extent of sexual abuse is such a sensitive one, there are thus few studies from which its nature and extent can be estimated, but the few existing literature do suggest that sexual abuse and rape of female children is a common feature especially in Northern Nigeria. A UNICEF's (2001), report revealed that majority of reported sexual assault victims in northern Nigeria, are children and adolescents of about the age of 15 or younger. The same report indicated that 0 – 32% of women experienced sexual assault. Hodges, (2001), also argued that the prevalence of sexual assault among girls is at least 15-3 times higher than among boys and moreover, sexual abuse of male children is under reported. Aliegba (2005:116) further argued that often, sexual assault of female children is committed by a family relation, friend or a neighbour.

**Discriminatory Treatment and Infanticide:** The preference for male children in many cultures can have very serious consequences for the health and lives of the females. As parts of African traditional belief, a high values is placed on the male child. This preference for male children has led to series of discrimination against female children. In many societies, violence can take different forms, such as girls having less access to food, education, medical care and other social services as compared to their male counterpart in the family. Extreme cases of discriminatory treatment such as sex selection, abortion of female fetus and female infanticide have been reported in most societies. Nanka and Anaekwe (2005), report showed that by 1990, the female literacy rate in Nigeria was 39.5% compared to 62% for males. The report further revealed less female enrolment in post primary schools, with the worse hit states being Kano, Kebbi and Sokoto with 27%, 20% and 16.7% respectively. In rural Bangladesh, malnutrition is found to be almost three times more common among girls than boys because of denial of adequate diet to the female child.

**Stalking:** The national centre for victims of crime (2008) defined stalking as, “virtually any unwanted contact between two people that directly or indirectly communicate a threat, or places the victim in fear”. The centre further advanced that 1 out of every 12 women have been stalked at some point in their life. Examples of behaviours that constitute stalking may include: a person appearing uninvited and without notice, making harassing phone calls, leaving written messages or objects that put one to fear, vandalizing a person's property. (National Women's Health Centre, 2008). Majority of women who suffer from this form of violence, according to a USA department of health and human services report (2008), fall between the age of 18 and 39 years. People who suffer from this also include persons in a former or current romantic relationship, like an ex-husband. Only a small number are stalked by strangers. Victims

may suffer from nightmares, feel depressed as a result of financial stress especially if the victim lost time from work or can go to work.

**Cultural and Traditional Bound Practices harmful to women:** Cultural and traditional practices have their roots in ancient traditional and religious beliefs of the society and these are handed down through succeeding generation. These beliefs and practices often are harmful and life threatening to women no matter how well intentioned. Thus, traditional practices like female genital violence, widowhood practices all undermine and degrade as well as lower the self-esteem of women in the society.

**Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting:** Worldwide, more than 130 million girls and women have undergone female genital cutting (Umoh. 2005). He advanced further that each year, nearly 2 million girls are at risk of this practice. Female genital cutting or mutilation refers to a number of traditional operations involving cutting away of part of female external genitals, or other parts causing injury to the genitals.

The practice is said to have originated some 2000 years ago from Southern Egypt or Northern Sudan. It served as a rite of passage to womanhood or defined a girl or women within the social norms of her ethnic group. The practice is generally performed in girls between the age of 4 and 12. It may however occur at different times in a woman's life depending on the norms and values of the society. Umoh (2005), carried out a study in Uyo in Akwa-Ibom state Nigeria, and out of the available sample comprising 50 young girls and women, majority claimed to have undergone one form of female genital cutting or another. Female genital mutilation involves partial or total removal of the female external genitals. The female genitals consist of vulva, which comprise the labia majora, labia minora, and the clitoris, covered by its hood located in front of the urinary and vaginal openings, (Umoh. 2005). The World health Organization, (WHO) the first United Nations Agency to take a stand against female genital cutting in 1995 classified female genital cutting into four;

- i. **Clitoridectomy (Types 1 FGC):** It involves the cutting, excision, or complete removal of the clitoris itself.
- ii. **Excision (Type 2 FGC):** This could involve the removal of the clitoris together with all parts of the labia minora.
- iii. **Infibulations (Type 3 FGC):** This also involves the removal of parts of or all of the external genital and stitching or narrowing of the vaginal openings leaving a small hole for the purpose of urination and menstrual flow.
- iv. **Unclassified (Type 4 FGC):** It involves all the operations mentioned in the above 3 forms of genital cutting.

Female genital cutting or mutilation is clearly a manifestation of violence against the women. It has so many negative consequences including tearing during child delivery, Viscero Vaginal fistula (VVF) and risk of contracting HIV/AIDS from unsterilized blades (Nafissatou et al 1998).

**Dowry-Related Violence:** In Africa, dowry has been an expected part of marriage transaction, until recently when the practices have become corrupted by the western "consumer" culture. In some parts of Africa and Asia, husbands are expected to pay bride wealth to compensate his bride's family for the loss of labour in her natal home. This exchange has consequently become commercialized with inflated bride wealth leaving many men with the impression that they have "purchased" a wife. Winikoff in Heisse and Ellsberg (2005), reported that 82% of his

sampled population in Cape province of South Africa confirmed that if a man pays “Lobolo” (bride wealth) for his wife, it means he owns her. In pre-colonial Africa however, bride wealth signifies a token and a symbolic payment to indicate the man’s intention. In Tiv land for example, Gbenda (2005:118), reported that bride wealth was 5 pounds for a virgin and 4 for girls that have lost their virginity.

In our contemporary society, the high bride wealth paid by a man in the midst of other contending needs leads to frustration and consequently domestic violence. Nwogu in Yakubu et al (2007), said it would force men to regard their wives as part of purchased property in the home and as such could be battered at a least provocation.

**Early Marriage:** Early marriage with or without the consent of the girl constitute a form of violence against women. It is a common phenomenon in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Official data on the nature of early marriage is limited, but the few existing literature point out that in parts of East and West Africa, marriage at 7 is a common occurrence. In Northern Nigeria Hodges (2001), reported that the average age of girls is 11. Similarly, the National Demographic Health Survey (1989), revealed that out of 26.5% couples, there is an age differences of 15 years between the man and the women, and this contribute to women’s powerlessness with respect to sexuality and reproductive health decision and disagreement that may lead to violence.

An adolescent girl with a much older spouse is more likely to participate in decisions about when to have sex, when to have children, how to protect herself from HIV/AIDS and to stop exploitation and maltreatment against herself (United Nations Population Fund Agency, UNFPA 2002). The report continued that, girls under 15 years are 5 times more likely to die in child birth than women in their twenties.

Enwereji (2007), argued further that at times, a family gives away their daughter to a man in place of money owned. In many families, if the head of the family owes a debt and cannot pay back to his creditors, he is free to use any of his daughters to pay for his debt. This practice is common in Northern Nigeria. In a UNICEF report, Hodge (2001), revealed that the gruesome murder of one Hauwa Ibrahim as a result of this practice generated a lot of controversies and headlines in 1987 in Kaduna State and shows the cruelty of early marriage to women folk.

**Widowhood Practices:** Each society has different ways of treating women who lost their husband. In Eastern Nigeria for example, a women whose husband dies is kept in a close room and have her hair shaved from the head, armpit, eyebrows an down to her pubic hairs, by other women. Enwereji (2007), said that the hair so shaved is buried deep in the soil to avoid contact with those whose husbands are still alive. The belief attached to this is that, the particles of hair touching those whose husbands are still alive is capable of causing the death of husbands of such women. Similarly, the concept of “trial by ordeal” associated with widowhood by which widows have to prove their innocence for the death of their husband (through witchcraft, poisoning or other means) seems to lie behind the practice especially among the Ibos in Nigeria. Sometimes a woman is required to drink water used to bath the corpse of her husband, (Akumadu in Hodges 2001). UN Development survey edited by Hodges (2001) also reviewed that 45% of widows were confined indoors for varying length of time; (62% in South-South, 60% in the North-West, 51% in the South-West, 48% in the North-East and 27% in the South-East). To express their grief, widows are sometimes required to sleep on the floor, abstain from taking baths, wear dirty clothes and cook from broken pot. These practices are inhuman and pose a risk of a number of diseases such as cholera, dysentery among others. Confinement also

improvises the widow as she cannot work and in some cases, she is subjected to payment of fines or stone to death for alleged commit of widowhood taboos. If she refuses to conform to all these practices, Hodges (2001) said another sanction in some culture is refusal of burial of such a woman.

**Psychological/Emotional Abuse:** Psychological abuse include excessive jealousy and attempts to control the woman's time, her activities including what she wears and even how she eats and what she eats as well as where she goes. Psychological abuse could also involve having prized possession destroyed; being denied sex or attention and threat to take their children away. Indeed most women and researchers into this area believed that psychological abuse is more killing than other forms of violence. Hence most victims suffer and die in silence (Heisse and Ellsberg 2005).

Emotional abuse on the other hand goes beyond husband calling his wife names or denying her sex and care. Wallace (2002), argued that this form of violence have far more reaching effects and leave behind scars that require a long term treatment. According to a report by the United States Department of Health Services (March 2008), emotional abuse takes the following forms: blaming a woman for everything, playing mind games, (i.e manipulating women), ordering a woman around, yelling and calling her degrading names, criticizing her for everything. Furthermore, Odojorin in Yakubu et al (2007), after studying the prevalent types and regularities of spousal abuse among Nigerians revealed that 81% of his respondents had suffered either verbal or emotional violence and 42.2% were abused in the presence of their children.

### **Violence against Women and Sustainable Development in Nigeria**

In an atmosphere of gender based violence, women suffer physically, morally, financially, psychologically, socially, spiritually and otherwise. This in a long run have a detrimental effect for sustainable development .This is because development cannot be sustained in an atmosphere were a woman's self-esteem is bruised, where she suffers depression, multiple injuries and fractures. Aremu et al (1999), also confirmed that men can also suffer injuries, loss of valuable, finance and bankruptcy as a result of violence.

Violence makes women traumatized, withdrawn, aggressive, helpless, and unable to build relationship of trust and intimacy necessary for healthy living. The thought of poor interpersonal relationship in a marriage usually depress women. It makes them develop a sense of worthlessness and low self-esteem. This negative perception of self is what accounts for lack of self-confidence and low productivity.

Moreover, a woman who suffers from domestic violence has no close friends, she seldom invites people to her home, even when she does, her visitors get subtle due to the fact that they must leave before her husband returns. Similarly, psychologically abused woman would refuse invitation or a responsibility in a group or organization without checking first with her spouse. She wears heavy makeup or sunglasses even indoors. Her wardrobe includes scarves, turtle necked sweaters, long sleeve shirts and slacks. She seldom concentrates on the farm or in her office.

UNICEF in Enwereji (2007), also confirmed that roughly 60 million women die of a spectrum of violence yearly while almost 8 million stillbirths and early noticeable physical effect of violence against women could result to physical disabilities such as blindness and multiple

scars on the body. In a typical agrarian setting, such a woman lacks the needed energy to engage in any serious physical work on the farm such as harvesting or tilling.

There is also evidence to show that battering of female partners have significant mental consequences. It has been reported in different studies that women who are exposed to violence develop mental illness and deterioration. Akande and Yolah cited in Yakubu et al (2007), looking at the effect of violence on the general wellbeing of the women said, the high incidence of visco vaginal fistula (VVF) in some part of Nigeria is attributed to traditional and cultural practices such as early marriage and female genital mutilation which women are forced to exposed to early in life.

Violence against women thus subdues women and reduces them to second class citizen and consequently grants them little access to resources and decision making positions in the society such as participation in politics and public life. It also hinders development in addition to its human cost. Ozohu (2006), mentioned that although techniques of estimating the economic and social cost of violence might be imperfect, various literature abounds on the phenomenon provided insight into how violence against women undermined and made nonsense of the efforts towards sustainable development in Nigeria. Commenting further on the impact of gender based violence in relation to development, master web(2012) report that, in Nigeria, only 25 out of the 360 members of the Nigerian House of Representatives are women and only about 4% of local government councilors are women, confirming that “women are under-represented in all political decision making bodies and their representation has not increased since the inception of democratic rule”. This could perhaps be an explanation for Nigeria’s low investment in sections that are crucial to human development outcomes such as health and education.

It is pertinent to note that the quality of our democracy, the strength of our economies, the health of our societies and the sustainability of peace are all undermined when we fail to fully tap half of the world’s talent and potential (abound in women). Where women have access to secondary education, good jobs, land and other assets, national growth and stability are enhanced, and we see lower maternal mortality, improved child nutrition, greater food security, and less risk of HIV and AIDS. It is then that development can occur and be sustained in the society

### **Conclusion**

No country can make meaningful progress while consistently regarding the female folk as second class citizens. Women as mothers and managers must be given the necessary support and encouragement to make a difference in this world. Women can and must be given active role in sustainable development and poverty eradication. This is because, when women are educated and healthy, their families, communities and countries benefit. This will translate into progress and development.

### **Recommendations**

Public awareness need to be vigorously pursued .Awareness can be made possible through publication and distribution of handbills and pamphlets carrying pictures and information portraying gender based violence in negative terms. Similarly, to prevent abuse and assist people who suffer from its destructive effect, women organization should organize workshops, where local women would be involved and become enlightened on the phenomenon in question. The workshops must cover aspects of women’s right. Education and awareness is advocated for, due to the fact that, the civil society and other agent of social control can only

assist abused women better if women themselves recognize and perceive as well as appropriately label offensive actions as abusive.

Furthermore, both men and women need re-socialization regarding the need for mutual understanding in discharging their roles and responsibilities. Women need to understand that 'gender equality' is nothing but an illusion. It's a wild goose chase that is misleading must feminists to see men as competitors rather than as partners in progress. There can only be gender balance if development must attain and sustained. More so, the law must be reviewed, and the law enforcement agents must be given adequate orientation on how to handle cases of gender based violence. The laws if reviewed would take care of the loop holes and lapses in our supreme legal document (constitution). The laws prohibiting rape for example and the manner in which the trial is conducted, and evidence demanded must be revisited to restore dignity to the women, so that rape would no longer be what feminist advocates regard as men's trial but women's tribulation.

Finally, all hands must be on deck by community leaders, religions leaders, political leaders, opinion leaders, and everybody concern to condemn the phenomenon of violence against women and label it appropriately as evil, inhuman and inimical to development of our society.

## References

- Adedoyin, M. and Adegoke, A.A. (2007), "Teenage prostitution; a survey of Ilorin situation" in Yakubu, A.J. (ed). *The Abused and the Society*, Ibadan. Royal People Nigeria ltd. p. 96
- Aliogba, E.T. (2005), "Violence Against Women; its Nature and Manifestation", in Angya (ed). 2007. *Perspective of violence Against Women in Nigeria*. Makurdi, Aboki Publisher.
- Aremu et al (1998), "Domestic violence. Trends, Prevalence, Causes and Interventions. In *Nigerian school health journal, number 1 and 2 vol. 11*.
- Armstrong, A. (1998), A culture and choice in Zimbabwe; in a violence against women research project. Harare.
- Doki, G.A. (2005), "Towards the Eradication of Violence Against Women in Nigeria; The Theatre Option". In Angya (ed). *Perspective of violence Against Women in Nigeria*. Makurdi, Aboki Publishers.
- Dosunmu, A. (2007), "Sexual Harassment in Tertiary Institutions in Lagos State." Yakubu A. (eds) (2007), *The Abused and the Society*. Ibadan, Royal people Nigeria ltd.
- Ellsberg and Hesse (2005), *Researching Violence Against Women: A practical guide for Researchers and Activists*. Washington D.C. WHO library Cataloguing in Publication Data. p. 8
- Enwereji, E. (1999), "Methods of Resolving Family Conflicts in Abia State: A Case study of spouses with matrimonial problems" in Yakubu. A. (eds). *The Abused and the Society*. Ibadan, Royal Nigeria ltd. p. 63
- Enwereji, E. (2007), "Gender and Violence: The Situation in Abia State of Southern Nigeria", in Yakubu, A. (eds). (2007), *The Abused and the Society*. Ibadan, Royal People Nigeria ltd. p. 54

- Gbenda, S, (2005), *Eschatology in Tiv's Traditional Religious Culture: an Interpreter Enquiry*. Nsukka, Chuka Educational Publishers. p.118
- Genyi, G. (2005) "Domestic Violence and Women's Right in Nigeria". in Angya (ed). (2005). *Perspective of Violence Against Women in Nigeria*, Makurdi, Aboki Publishers. p.67, 102
- Giddens, A. (2003). *Introduction to Sociology*. Chicago, Northern and Company. p. 115
- Heralambos, M. and Holborn, M (2004) *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*. London, Slough University Tutorial Press ltd.
- Hodge, A. (ed). (2001), *Children's and Women Rights in Nigeria: A wake up call*. National Planning Commission Nigeria.
- Hugh, M et al (2002), *Sociology the Core 11<sup>th</sup> edition* New York McGraw Hill. p. 225
- Kozu, (1999), *Domestic Violence in Japan*. In America Psychologist Publication. New York, Market House Books Limited.
- National Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) (1 998), UN Publication sales no E 89 iv 5.
- Nnaka, C.V, and Aneakwe, M.C. (2005), *Gender disparity in Nigerian Secondary School Environment. Implication for National Development*". A Paper presented at a workshop on gender inequality in school environment'.
- Nwogu, A. (2007), Oral Narrative. Pan-American Health Organization, Violence in Americans, the society Pandemic of the 20th century, in Yakubu, A. (ed). *The Abused and the Society*. Ibadan, Royal People ltd.
- Odey, M.O. (2005), *Violence Against Women in Nigeria. A Causal Analysis of Domestic Violence*". in Angya (ed). (2005) in Perspective of violence Against Women in Nigeria. Makurdi, Aboki Publishers. Pp. 23, 83-84
- Okpeh, O. Jnr. (2005), "Re—conceptualizing violence Against Women: A Critique of Existing Perspective and their Implications for Sustainable Development" Angya (ed) *Perspective in Violence Against Women in Nigeria*. Makurdi, Aboki Publishers. Pp. 16,19.
- Ozohu, O. (2006), The role of Nigeria between Politics since Independence Implication for National development, *Journal of the National Association of science, humanities and Educational Research Vol.4 No.4. July, 2006*.
- Raji B (2004), "The Plight of the Abused", in the Sunday Tribune (2004) 24 Feb.
- Umoh, J.O (2005), "Female Genital Cutting: A case study of Sexism and Violation of human Rights, *Journal of Gender and Health Studies. Vol. 3. No. 1 and 2, 20*.
- UNICEF (2001) *Children's and Women's Rights in Nigeria: A wake up call: Assessment and Analysis*.
- United Nations Population Fund Agency (UNDPFA) (2002), *State of the world population 2002; people, poverty and possibilities*; New York, Department of Social Affairs.
- Utulu, S.N and Utulu R, E (2005), "Patterns of Violence Against married Women in a tertiary institutions in Makurdi" In Angya (ed) *perspective of violence against women in Nigeria*, Makurdi, Aboki Publishers. p.46

Wallace, H. (2002), *Family violence, legal medical and social perspective*. Fourth Edition. California State University New York, Fresno Boston.

Wegh, S. F. (2003) *Between Continuity and Change Tiv concept of Tradition and Modernity*, Enugu. Snaap Press Ltd.