Assessment of Gender Based Violence Against Women in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State

**Onojah, D. M. Ph.D**

*Department of Early Childhood Care Education,*

*Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo*

*Oyo State, Nigeria*

*onojahdave12@gmail.com*

*&*

**Abidoye, A. J.**

*Department of Early Childhood Care Education,*

*Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo*

*Oyo State, Nigeria*

*abidoyeabiodun@yahoo.com*

**Abstract**

*In this study, gender-based violence against women in Benue State's Otukpo Metropolis was the main emphasis. This study's research design is a survey. The purpose of using the survey method is to get answers from the sampled respondents. Because surveys are the most suitable tool for acquiring information on demographics, attitudes, views, and perceptions, their use in data collection is warranted. Residents of Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State make up the population of this study project. For this study, a random sample of 500 respondents from the population was selected. Means and percentages were used to analyze the data. The study's findings showed that the types of gender-based violence experienced by women include stalking, physical assault, sexual assault (including rape), forced marriage, female genital mutilation, forced abortion, and forced sterilization. The study also found that alcohol; insufficient laws and processes, poverty, illiteracy and ignorance, cultural acceptance of GBV, and a lack of cultural norms are all contributing factors to this crime. The study also showed that psychological and behavioral health issues are a result of gender-based violence, and that traumatic events limit women's ability to contribute to national development and violate their human rights. The survey ultimately showed that taking legal action, educating people, enacting favorable regulations, offering counseling services, empowering women, and enlightening/sensitizing people are the best ways to eradicate gender-based violence as regarded by women. The researchers advise that, in light of the study's findings, a successful campaign should be launched to educate the public by involving non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations and using a variety of media outlets, including radio, television, and posters.*

**Keywords:** Gender Based Violence, Women and Discrimination

**Introduction**

Violence against women is a sign of an uneven power relationship between men and women, which leads to discrimination against women and the restriction of women's complete progress (Okolie, Mohammed, & Ononye, 2021). Injury, death, psychological damage, maldevelopment, or deprivation are all outcomes that are either certain to occur or have a high possibility of occurring as a result of the purposeful use of physical force, whether it is threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, a group, or a community (Okolie et al., 2021). One of the most onerous types of gender inequality is gender-based violence (GBV), which poses a fundamental obstacle to women and men participating equally in social, economic, and political realms. Violence against women can be characterized as violent acts that happen in the home or in public and result in physical harm, sexual harm, or psychological anguish for women. This term refers to any use of coercion or force intended to maintain or advance hierarchical gender relationships (Okolie et al, 2021). Various terms for it include "domestic violence" or "family violence." It may be psychological or emotional violence, which can include recurrent verbal abuse, harassment, incarceration, and deprivation of physical, financial, and personal resources (Okolie et al., 2021). According to the UN, VAW is an example of historically uneven power relations between men and women, which have resulted in dominance and discrimination against women. In 1993, the United Nations established the first definition of violence against women that was widely accepted. This definition states that this violence is "any act of gender-based violence that results, or is likely to result, in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, whether occurring in public or private life" (Okolie et al., 2021)."Gender-based violence (GBV) is an act of violence that results in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, girls, men, or boys, as well as threats of such acts, coercion, or the arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or in private life," according to the United Nations (Chime, Nduagubam & Orji, 2022).

According to Jhpiego, U.S. (2018) and UNICEF 2(020),gender based violence can be described as the misuse of victims' physical, emotional, or financial power and control, resulting in a decline in their well-being, dignity, self-confidence, and sovereignty. Intimate partner violence, rape, sexual assault, and sexual violence are only a few examples of this violence, which is motivated by gender-related power imbalances (Jhpiego, U.S., 2018). It is possible for these several types of GBV to coexist rather than arise separately. GBV not only has negative effects on health, but it also negatively affects employment, productivity, and total economic growth. Due to perceived stigmatization from family and friends, GBV continues to be hidden in a culture of silence despite these repercussions. Many survivors who seek justice are confronted with resistance from their family and communities and fall further into poverty, isolation, and new forms of abuse (World Health Organization (WHO), 2020 & UNICEF, 2020). Since society prioritizes preserving family honor and reputation above pursuing justice for this horrible crime, this deters additional survivors from revealing GBV or seeking medical attention (Chime et al, 2022).

 Both sexes are guilty of gender-based violence. The majority of gender-based violence episodes do, however, include a female victim and a male perpetrator, and even when GBV happens to boys or men, male perpetrators are still at fault (Chime et al., 2022). Women and girls are more prone to encounter abuse because of their vulnerability, and they are frequently less able to report it (Chime et al., 2022). Because of this, even though the former has a more comprehensive definition, the phrases "GBV" and "violence against women" are sometimes used synonymously. One in three of them may endure physical or sexual abuse throughout their lifetimes, mostly at the hands of males, and women and girls have less control over their bodies, decisions, and resources than do men. In the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (UNDEVW), violence is referred to as a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over, the discrimination over, and discrimination against women by men, and to the prevention of women's full advancement," as well as one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men (Akarika et al, 2019). This inferior status is maintained and reinforced by women's lack of social and economic authority, conventional gender norms, and the low regard for women's labor. Early marriage, widower inheritance, and male property ownership foster female reliance, particularly in areas with high rates of female underemployment and unemployment and limited access to social assistance services (Akarika et al, 2019). This study assessed gender based violence in Otukpo Metropolis, Benue State.

**Statement of the Problem**

The exploitation and abuse of victims' physical, emotional, or financial power and control is what is known as gender-based violence (GBV), and it has a negative impact on the victims' health, dignity, self-esteem, and sovereignty. GBV is extremely challenging to address since our ethnic groups, cultures, and traditions tend to downplay its significance in society. Even though social welfare units have been established in the majority of local governments nationwide, it seems that the number of violent crimes is still rising. As a result, social workers are finding it harder and harder to come up with workable programs that can effectively reduce the rate of violence. The lack of adequate regulation in this area makes this particular issue more problematic. This study's goal is to investigate the issue of GBV in Otukpo Metropolis, Benue State, with a particular emphasis on how women are seen.

**Objectives of the Study**

i. To find out the forms of gender based violence available in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State.

ii. To ascertain the causes of gender based violence in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State.

iii. To examine the consequences of gender based violence in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State.

iv. To determine the effective strategies to end gender based violence in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State.

**Research Questions**

i. What are the forms of gender-based violence available in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State?

ii. What are the causes of gender-based violence in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State?

iii. What are the consequences of gender-based violence in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State?

iv. What are the effective strategies to end gender-based violence in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State?

**Methodology**

This study's research design is a survey because surveys are the most suitable tool for acquiring information on demographics, attitudes, views, and perceptions, their use in data collection is warranted. Residents of Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State make up the population of this study project. For this study, a random sample of 500 respondents from the population was selected. Means and percentages were used to analyze the data. Only mean scores of 2.50 and higher were taken into consideration; mean scores lower than 2.50 were disregarded.

**Data Analysis**

**Research Question 1:** What are the forms of gender-based violence faced by women in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State?

**Table 1 Forms of Gender Based Violence in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/NO** | **Items** | **Mean** | **Remark** |
| 1 | Psychological violence | 2.84 | Agree |
| 2 | Stalking | 3.01 | Agree |
| 3 | Physical violence | 3.21 | Agree |
| 4 | Sexual violence (including rape) | 3.13 | Agree |
| 5 | Forced marriage | 3.51 | Agree |
| 6 | Female genital mutilation | 2.83 | Agree |
| 7 | Forced abortion and forced sterilization | 2.91 | Agree |
| 8 | Sexual harassment | 3.64 | Agree |

**Source: Field survey (2023)**

Result in Table 1 shows that all the 8 items were accepted by the respondents as the forms of gender based violence faced by women in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State with mean scores above 2.50.

**Research Question 2:** What are the causes of gender-based violence in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State?

**Table 2 Causes of Gender Based Violence in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/NO** | **Items** | **Mean** | **Remark** |
| 1 | Poverty | 3.14 | Agree |
| 2 | Illiteracy/ignorance | 3.52 | Agree |
| 3 | Cultural acceptability of GBV | 3.71 | Agree |
| 4 | Alcohol | 3.63 | Agree |
| 5 | Inadequate laws and systems | 3.83 | Agree |

**Source: Field survey (2023)**

Result in Table 2 shows that the respondents agreed that all the 5 items are the causes of gender based violence in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State with mean scores above 2.50.

**Research Question 3:** What are the consequences of gender-based violence in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State?

**Table 3 Consequences of Gender Based Violence in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/NO** | **Items** | **Mean** | **Remark** |
| 1 | Psychological/mental health problems | 3.11 | Agree |
| 2 | Traumatic experiences | 3.46 | Agree |
| 3 | Hinders women's contribution to national development | 3.28 | Agree |
| 4 | Violate women's human right | 3.81 | Agree |

**Source: Field survey (2023)**

Result in Table 3 revealed that the respondents agreed that all the 4 items are the consequences of gender based violence in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State with mean scores above 2.50.

**Research Question 4:** What are the effective strategies to end gender based violence in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State?

**Table 4 Effective Strategies to End Gender Based Violence in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/NO** | **Items** | **Mean** | **Remark** |
| 1 | Taking legal actions | 3.82 | Agree |
| 2 | Education | 3.72 | Agree |
| 3 | Making favourable policies | 3.29 | Agree |
| 4 | Provision of counselling services | 3.19 | Agree |
| 5 | Empowerment | 3.36 | Agree |
| 6 | Enlightenment/ Sensitization | 3.93 | Agree |

**Source: Field survey (2023)**

Result in Table 4 shows that the respondents agreed that all the 6 items are the effective strategies to end gender based violence is been perceived by women in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State with mean scores above 2.50.

**Discussion of Findings**

 The results of research question one showed that most respondents agreed that sexual harassment, forced abortion, forced sterilization, stalking, physical violence, psychological violence, and sexual violence (including rape) are the main types of gender-based violence experienced by women in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State. Other forms include forced marriage, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and forced marriage. The results of this study are consistent with the Istanbul Convention's (2011) findings, which included a number of various types of violence against women, including female genital mutilation, forced abortion, forced sterilization, and sexual harassment.

 The results of study question two showed that most respondents believed that gender-based violence in Benue State's Otukpo Metropolis is caused by poverty, illiteracy/ignorance, cultural acceptance of GBV, alcohol usage, and insufficient laws and mechanisms. The results of this study are consistent with those of Abama and Kwaja (2009), who claimed that violence is associated with unfavourable economic situations including poverty, unemployment, underemployment, and so on, which lead to dissatisfaction and financial insecurity. Material anxiety often contributes to tension and overall unease in a setting of widespread chronic poverty. The exclusion of women from their families and communities, as well as their lack of access to basic education, were also mentioned by Sunday & Chizoba (2015).

 The results of research question three showed that most respondents were in agreement that psychological and mental health issues, as well as the violation of women's human rights, were the results of gender-based violence in Benue State's Otukpo Metropolis. Traumatic experiences also hampered women's ability to contribute to national development. This supports the claimed made by Sunday & Chizoba (2015) that many women experiences abuse on a regular basis. This is likely due to the fact that women are the weaker sex and that men are the ones who married the women, so they have the final say in family-related matters. According to Nnadi (2012), gender-based violence against women has catastrophic effects on their health since they are typically controlled and dominated by their spouses.

 The results of research question number four showed that most respondents agreed that taking legal action, educating people, enacting favourable policies, offering counselling services, empowering people, and enlightening/sensitizing people are the most effective ways to end gender-based violence in Otukpo Metropolis of Benue State. Due to the fact that just a few States have ratified the Violence against Women Prevention, Protection and Prohibition Act of 2002, this finding that Nigerian legislation has not aided in the eradication of gender-based violence is unsupported (Sunday & Chizoba, 2015). Only four of Nigeria's 36 States, Ebonyi, Jigawa, Cross Rivers, and Lagos, have signed this into law, according to the British Council's 2012 Gender in Nigeria Report.

**Conclusion**

Finally, this study showed that the types of gender-based violence experienced by women include psychological abuse, stalking, physical abuse, sexual abuse (including rape), forced marriage, female genital mutilation, forced abortion, forced sterilization, and sexual harassment. The study also found that alcohol, insufficient laws and processes, poverty, illiteracy and ignorance, cultural acceptance of GBV, and a lack of cultural norms are all contributing factors to this crime. The study also showed that psychological and behavioural health issues are a result of gender-based violence, and that traumatic events limit women's ability to contribute to national development and violate their human rights. Finally, the study showed that providing counselling services, legal action, education, the implementation of supportive legislation, empowerment and enlightenment/sensitization campaigns, and empowerment are the most effective ways to eradicate gender-based violence.

**Recommendations**

The study's authors consequently suggest the following actions based on their findings:

i. To educate the public about violence against women and encourage them to report such incidents to the proper authorities at the local level, there should be an effective campaign involving non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, and various media channels such as radio, television, and posters.

ii. Appropriate policy creation and implementation techniques should be used to eradicate all forms of domestic abuse against women.

iii. Both traditional and religious leaders should get the required education on the problems and impacts of domestic abuse, gender-based violence, and sexual and gender-based violence against women and young girls.

iv. Women should have access to sufficient economic possibilities, including the development of their talents and access to finance.

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