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# DOMESTIC AND SOCIAL VIOLENCE DURING COVID -19 PANDEMIC IN CALABAR, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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#### ABSTRACT

The world stood still by the emergence of Corona-virus otherwise called COVID-19 pandemic. The origin of the virus has remained a mystery. However, the origin of the virus is no longer as important as the consequences occasioned by the pandemic. In this study, we examined the domestic and social violence during the pandemic in Calabar, the capital of Cross River State. In order to underscore the domestic and social violence of this pandemic we adopted the social PEN theory of structural change as a theoretical framework. The study found that there was hunger and loss of jobs that resulted to corporate begging in the land. We however, recommended that government should create enabling legislations that will forestall such level of predication in case of similar occurrence in the near future.

Key words: Domestic violence, social violence COVID-19 pandemic, lockdown and social PEN theory

#### 1. Introduction

Seven (7) months ago, the whole world stood still because of a virus designated as COVID-19 pandemic. The virus is called "Corona Virus" whose origin has remained a mystery until date. However, the origin of the virus is no longer as important as the consequences that came with the virus. It started as a joke while it was raging in faraway China and parts of Europe, people were falling down on the streets and dying as a result.

The virus attacks its victims by the seizure of breath and attendant coughing and eventual death. This incidence reminds use of the "Ebola virus" which a certain sawyers brought to Nigeria from Sierra Leone. The Ebola only gave Nigeria a scare because a certain medical practitioner in Nigeria, wrestled Sawyers to his hospital bed when he attempted to escape from the hospital. This lady died

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by that single act of heroism because she contacted the Ebola from that suspected career and of course, she died. That was the end of the Ebola virus in Nigeria.

Unfortunately, the Corona Virus came like a wild fire. It was difficult to single out a particular career and wrestle him to his hospital bed like the case of Ebola. The virus came into Nigeria quite unnoticed and we started recording deaths in our major cities, Lagos, Kano, Abuja, Port Harcourt, etc. The incidence of deaths led to a total lockdown in the country. There was no movement from one state to the other. In some instances, there was a total lockdown in some cities like Lagos and Port Harcourt such that parents and children were trapped in their homes.

COVID-19, pandemic lockdown result to lots of consequence, economic, social, domestic, etc. In this article, we examined the domestic and social violence occasioned by the COVID 19 pandemic in Calabar the capital of Cross River State.

This pandemic brought untold hardship to people and consequently attendant domestic and social violence in several dimensions. Spouses who hitherto were not used to staying longer hours together were compelled to do so by the COVID-19 Lockdown. Consequently, certain inadequacies in either the husband or the wife became obvious. Those husbands that cannot tolerate their wife's tantrums resulted to the use of fist against the wife. In some cases, there are husbands with miniature stature whose wives stand 5fts tall, resulted to beating up their husbands whom they could not also tolerate during the lockdown.

Beyond the domestic violence during the pandemic, there were social anomalies that were occasioned by the lockdown. There was acute shortage of food especially in states that had total lockdown. In Calabar, even when there was no total lockdown, people were hungry and "corporate begging" became the order of the day. Corporate begging in this case refers to beggars who under normal circumstances could not be beggars if not for the pandemic that shot down their means of livelihood. Private school teachers, for instance; their monthly income became altered by their proprietors who could no longer pay them because schools were shot-down.

Thanks to government because civil servants were paid salaries throughout the lockdown period especially federal civil servants. Those who resulted to corporate begging were the so called self-employed e.g brick layers, carpenters, plumbers, tailors, house keepers, gardeners, day care givers, hoteliers, food vendors, etc. some of these services were no longer required during the lockdown. Those who earn their living by giving day care to parents who use to go to work lost their jobs during this period because parents were not going to work, therefore could stay at home and take care of their children. It resulted to jobs lost for day care givers; foodstuffs in the market became too costly therefore, people prefer to save the little cash in their hand for food rather than requesting for the service of bricklayers, plumbers, tailors, carpenters except where such services were required desperately.

## 1. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

## **Conceptual Clarification**

## a. Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is violence committed by someone in the victims domestic circle or other abuse in a domestic setting such as in marriage or cohabitation.

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Barkley (2018) posits that domestic violence refers to the victimization of a person with whom the abuser has had an intimate,, romantic, or spousal relationship. He went further to state that domestic violence encompasses violence against both men and women, and includes violence in gay and lesbian relationships. Domestic violence consists of a pattern of Coercive behavior used by a competent adult or adolescent to establish and maintain power and control over another competent adolescent. These behaviors can occur in different forms; either alone or in combinations. Often times, they occur in combinations. They can occur sporadically or continually. In most cases, sporadically. They can manifest inform of physical abuse, physiological abuse, stalking, nonsensical sexual behaviour, etc.

By extension, there are forms of physical violence, which include assault weapons, pushing, shoving, slapping, binding, punching, choking, kicking etc. presumably though; violence is largely determined by the victims of abuse because the abuser in most cases presumes correctional and deterrent sagacity. Unless of course the victims of abuse draws the sympathy of passers-by to their condition, it becomes difficult to determine a violent abuse.

## b. Social Violence

Social violence refers to any type of violence committed by individuals or the community that has a social impact. Social violence manifests in various magnitudes depending on the amount of space offered the abusers. Children are the greatest victims of social violence. For instance, the COVID–19 pandemic brought about social distancing that negates regular social interaction which is the bedrock of human society according to Amzar and Razum, (2018). Social distancing came with unimaginable social consequences amongst siblings. In South Africa, a Twitter Lady identified as Rose Berry shared a weird and thrilling story about a teenager who impregnated his 15 and 13 year old younger sisters.

According to Rose Berry, the 3 siblings were home alone throughout the lockdown that lasted for five weeks in South Africa as their Mom was an essential worker who was allowed mobility Inspite the lockdown. The boy unable to control his appetite for sex began to sleep with his siblings. The mommy saw the 15 year old showing pregnancy symptoms and on investigation, she found that her son was responsible for the pregnancy. As if that was not enough the second sister age 13 was also pregnant for the same young man, her son. The boy has since ran away from home.

The fall out of this narrative is the social violence necessitated by social distancing. The attendant violence associated with certain actions taken either by parents or government will no doubt leave much to be desired.

Anthony Guterres Secretary General of the United Nations, suggested that the Corona Virus pandemic is quickly turning into a "broader child rights crisis." This outburst came on the heels of media coverage that proves an increase of domestic violence and violence against children. Risk factors for violence, abuse and neglect are on the rise for children under confinement.

## c. COVID-19 Pandemic and poverty

Corona Virus pandemic was Christianed COVID-19. A supposedly health challenge that translated to economic, social and cultural challenges.

The tourism industry was affected as travel opportunity for Chinese tourists, who usually spend billions annually, were severely curtailed. There were increased flights cancellations, cancelled hotel

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bookings, and cancelled local and international events worth over 200 billion US dollar (Ozili and Arun, 2020). According to this report, the flow of goods through global supply chains vastly reduced significantly given that China was the world's largest manufacturer and exporter, and the Chinese government ordered the closure of major factories in the country. This was a serious economic consequence on both the economy of china and their customers. Countries like Iran, Italy and France issued stay-at-home nationwide policies to control the spread of the virus, which had already caused multiple deaths and was putting pressure on the national public healthcare infrastructure.

In Nigeria, Lagos became the most affected city followed by Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. Nevertheless, the virus spread to all 36 states of the federation like wild fire during harmatan provoking a total lockdown across the country. There was no interstate movement which led to a short fall in the supply of goods and services across the states. To say that this pandemic brought untold hardship to people is to say the least. People's behavior and attitudes were affected by this pandemic. People were compelled to wear nose mask before venturing with public space. Some could wear face shield including nose mask to church or even market. There was a total overhaul in the way people dress and interact with fellow human beings. There was food scarcity. There was no money and banks were not accessible. Poverty was officially inaugurated.

## d. Struggle for survival

Life was hard for everyone during a pandemic. But in a global crisis; it is women who carry extra burdens, says Raquel Lagunas (2020), Director of the gender team at the United Nations Development Programme. Because of their reproductive role in society, they are the ones who take care of the kids, the house, the food, the survival of families. Yet women are also finding time to play a vital role in helping others cope. Nigerian activist, **Osas Egbon** in Palermo, Italy says the pandemic, has brought more urgency to her volunteer work of helping women who have been sex trafficked. These people were not domiciled anywhere in particular and the pandemic made matters worse.

It may be recalled that in Nigeria, Michael Collins Ajeren otherwise called Don Jazzy, a music producer and singer based in Lagos gave \$100,000 to an elderly woman who was willing to offer sex for 500.00 to feed herself and her children. The touching story was reported by a Journalist, Kolawale Atanda Adejojo in Igbire Abeokuta, Ogun state Nigeria. In a short-Clip, a man can be heard in the background talking to her in Yoruba dialect as he asked her what she intends to do in the face of this hardship. She answered, saying she is willing to sleep with any man who gives her \$ 500.00 to get food for her children. "Are you still sexually active?" the Journalist prodded further. "yes I am, I still have a vagina !" she answered.

The import of this story is one incidence of the many incidences that featured during the pandemic. Considering the age of the woman about 75 years or more, the children she was referring to might just be her grandchildren whose, active mother may have abandoned them with her own mother. But the old woman considers it her responsibility to put food on the table for the kids. Her outburst attracted sympathy from well-meaning Nigerians including Don Jazzy who donated  $\frac{N}{100,000}$  naira to assist the woman. Not to mention people who died during the pandemic because they had underlying health issues yet they could not access health care. The COVID-19 pandemic was harzardous.

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## 2. Theoretical framework

### Social PEN theory of structural change by Mustapha Bintube (2020)

The social PEN theory argues that there are invisible atomic PEN structural forces capable of bringing about social change in the society. For example, the likes of corona virus as an indivisible and as well as invisible phenomenon has social energy to enable it move, forms and combines to produce severe structural effects with newer patterns and structures capable of changing man's social life and has impact on institutional structural shifts (Bintube, 2020).

The pandemic altered social grouping complexes to the extent that siblings could commit incest with impunity. The social PEN theory of structural change provides analysis and change in social structures and relationships among members of the society and family. From the benefit of hindsight, the momentum behind Covid-19 pandemic and its effects on amplifying the behavior, attitude and knowledge of the individual members call for social cohesion amongst members of the society to promote trust and offer its members the opportunity of upward mobility (Bintube, 2020).

Unfortunately, however, there could be a conflict between natural instincts and struggle for survival by individual members of the family. Natural instincts are largely inheritable and unalterable tendencies of an organism to make a complex and specific response to environmental stimuli without involving reason. Sexual relationship is instinctual and a reaction that falls below conscious level. But how does social PEN theory of structural change vindicate a victim of incest caused by natural instinct and supported by an action that falls below conscious Level? This is a limitation of the social PEN theory of structural change. The lockdown and social distancing that accompanied the Covid-19 pandemic is alien to any sociological model. However, we deduced certain features of the theory that provides an insight to understanding the circumstance like social cohesion, social grouping complexes, natural instinct, struggle for survival etc. It behooves on individuals therefore to manage their instincts and direct them correctly within the ambience of tolerable social grouping complexes.

Because of the spontaneous occurrence of a pandemic; individuals especially parents should abinitio avoid creating opportunities for siblings to exercise unwholesome desires amongst themselves.

#### 3. Discussion and Findings

Data is analyzed based on sampled respondents. Respondents were randomly selected from some locations in the city of Calabar. Areas such as Uwanse Lane in Calabar south was selected, Ikot Eshie and Ikot Ansa were selected in Calabar municipality. We distributed a total of 120 questionnaire without recourse to the size of the area so selected. The COVID-19 pandemic was a popular phenomenon that affected every nook and cranny. Therefore the distribution of the questionnaires depended on the availability and readiness of respondents to interface with the researcher in the three (3) sampled locations. However, 110 questionnaire were recovered. Therefore data is analyzed based on 110 questionnaire returned.

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r	TABLE 1: Domestic and social violence during CO vib 17						
S/N	VARIABLES	SA	Α	D	SD	TOTAL	
1.	Couples infractions during Covid-19	80	15	10	5	110	
		73%	14%	9%	4%	100%	
2.	Children tantrums increased	40	68	2	0	110	
		36%	62%	2%	0	100%	
3.	Loss of odd jobs	89	20	01	0	110	
	-	81%	18%	1%	0%	100%	
4.	Increased hunger and appetite for food	75	30	3	2	110	
		68%	27%	3%	2%	100%	
5.	Increased cost of food items	78	22	6	4	110	
		71%	20%	5%	4%	100%	
6.	Increased corporate begging	55	40	10	5	110	
		50%	36%	9%	5%	100%	
7.	Increased sexual harassment/Rape	68	30	10	2	110	
		62%	27%	9%	2%	100%	
8.	Rampant cases of sex for food	40	65	5	0	110	
	-	36%	59%	5%	0	100%	
9.	Sexual relationship among siblings.	5	6	70	29	110	
		5%	5%	64%	26%	100%	

Source: Researchers' Survey, 2020.

#### Discussion

#### a. Couples infractions increased during Covid-19

This variable under domestic violence was largely reacted upon. About 80 of the respondents representing 73 percent of the total respondents strongly agreed that couples infractions increased during COVID 19. Oral submission has it that a lot of spouses were not used to staying together at home for long hours like the situation created by the lockdown. The result was intolerance of certain attitudes displayed by a spouse and which the partner was not used to became the cause of quarrel. A good number of men do not bond with their families. They come back from work around 4:30 to 5pm and off they leave to join their peers else where outside the family and come home around 10pm to 11pm to just sleep. But Covid 19 restructured all that. There was no work and no visitation. Joints (drinking palours) meetings, were close down by the lockdown.

#### b. Children tantrums became more visible during COVID-19

The children were also hit by Covid-19 pandemic. Schools were closed down and children were no longer leaving their homes to any where so their tantrums became more visible than ever before. A parent who was not known to be a child beater became indulged in child beating and confinement. 68 respondents representing 59 percent agreed; while 40 respondents representing 36 percent strongly agreed. Although a few parents claimed they hired private teachers to come to their homes and engage the children, that can only last for 1 hour or 2. The rest of the day the children spent idle and incidentally relapse to throwing tantrums.

#### c. Loss of Odd Jobs

For obvious reasons of lack of jobs in Nigeria, a good number of men and women engage in odd jobs for the purpose of earning a living. For instance, bricklayers, plumbers, hairdressers, house helps, etc are categories of persons whose income depended on daily wages. In other words, once they do not show up in their places of work they loss income for that day. The pandemic caused a lockdown and the economy came to a halt. 89 respondents representing 81% of the total respondents

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strongly agreed that there was loss of odd jobs during the pandemic. A bulk of these respondents are teachers in private schools. They cried out for assistance to support their families because their proprietors automatically stopped their salaries. A lot of them placed their predicaments on social media requesting to be hired as private tutors for children in their respective homes. Government did not help matters as they was no distribution of palliatives to cushion the effect of the pandemic. It became evident that palliatives were hoarded in several government warehouses as was exposed by the "ENDSARS" Protesters. People were restricted to their houses and kept hungry without food especially children yet warehouses were stocked with food items. This underscores the saying that "A hungry man is an angry man" ENDSARS protest was a medium used by the angry youths in Nigeria to express their disappointments with government.

### d. Increased hunger and appetite for food:

Table 1 above speaks volumes. About one hundred and five (105) respondents representing 95% of the total respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that there was increase hunger and appetite for food as a result of the lockdown. Paradoxically though, people tend to eat more when they are idle than during active working days. There was increased appetite for food yet there was no food. A young man between the age of 40-46 years affirmed that he had to leave his house and go elsewhere to avoid the cry for food of his children because he knows not how to get the food.

#### e. Increased cost of food items:

Sequel to the Covid 19 pandemic came a lockdown. There was no inter state movements and traders who hitherto travel to Aba in Abia State to buy goods could no longer travel. The few goods remaining in the market had their prices sky rocketed. The result in table 1 says that 78 respondents representing 71% of the total respondents strongly agreed to the facts that cost of food items increased in the market. However, we visited Ikot Eshie market to acquaint ourselves of the change in prices of food items as a result of the pandemic.

S/n	Food item	Fomer price	Lockdowm price
1	Bag of rice (25kg)	10,000	13,000
2	Basin of Garri (Ugep)	8,000	10,000
3	Indomie chicken Onion(Small size)	1,900	2,400
4	Crayfish (custard rubber)	2,000	3,500
5	Tomatoes (4 balls)	200	400
6	Beans(1 modn)	400	450
7	Vegetable Oil (1.4 liters)	1,000	1,200
8	Quokar oat (Medium tin)	750	1,600
9	Clapper tomatoes (medium)	200.00	300.00
10	Detergent (WAW sachet)	50.00	80.00
11	Milo(refil) carton	10,000	13,000
12	Fish fish (cat fish)	600	1,200
13	Yam Tuber (Ogaja yam)	700	1,200
14	Sachet water(Aqua prime) 1 bag	100	150
15	Groundnut 1 cup	50	70

Source: Researchers' survey, 2020

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It happened that change in cost of food items cuts across feeding bounds up to food vendors otherwise called "**Mama put**". In the case of mama put, they simply adjusted their quantity of food to enable them meet up their cost price and make gain. For instance, a ball of akpu that formally goes for 50 Naira and any able bodied guy could take two balls and be satisfied was no longer so because the sizes changed during the Lockdown to the extent that the same good guy that use to take just 2 balls started taking 4 balls to get satisfaction, That means the sizes of akpu became rather too small for satisfaction.

The same goes for Onion. Usually Onion can be sold at various prices say 50 Naira, 100 Naira, 200 Naira, etc. However, the pandemic hijacked the price of onion to unimaginable height. The onion that on a good day could be bought for 50 Naira actually became 100. In other words, they were no longer 50 Naira onions in the market. It was no longer business as usual at Ikot Eshie market because of the pandemic.

# f. Corporate Begging

Corporate begging became the order of the dey. It is called corporate begging because it was the unusual type of begging.

A supposedly gentleman or lady will walk up to you and request for financial assistance because his or her children have no food to eat. That was the situation during the pandemic. These people were not begging before the COVID-19 pandemic. Table 1 shows that 50% and 36% either strongly agreed or agreed, respectively. This begging was everywhere in the church premises, on the street, around the market, etc. There was a case of a woman who authoritatively accosted me inside my street (Akiba street at Ikot Ansa) that she needed N500 naira to add to whatever amount she was having to enable her buy drugs for her sick child. She was in need because her husband traveled and could not return because of the lockdown. In fact, she accompanied me to my house to get the money from my wife because I did not have N500 naira on the road where she accosted me. Things were just difficult for everybody both the haves and the haves-not.

## g. Sexual Harassment/Rape

It could be recalled that the social distancing that occasioned the COVID-19 pandemic led to the closure of hotels by government according to the principles handed down by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control is the country's National Public Health Institute, with the mandate to lead the preparedness, detection and responds to infections diseases, out break and public health emergencies like the covid-19 pandemic.

The National Coordinator, Nigeria Sex Workers Association, Amaka Enemo, says sex workers in the country have been forced to suspend activities, especially in Lagos and Abuja, due to the lockdown caused by COVID-19 pandemic. Enemo said that although sex workers offer "essential services", they will remain indoors because their services involved "substantial bodily contact" (Akinkuotu, E. 2020).

This development led to sexual harassment and in most cases, rape in secluded areas of town because the desire for sex could not be suspended by COVID-19 pandemic, the desire for sex raged like a storm with no particular target especially amongst unmarried young men. The #ENDSARS protest that followed suit was an expression of pent-up resentment as a result of the lockdown.

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## h. Sex for Food/survival

The aged woman from Abeokuta who got captured by a journalist became a landmark of the "sex for food" saga that accompanied the COVID-19 lockdown. According to table 1, about 36% and 59% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed respectively to the fact that there were cases of sex for food during the pandemic. However, it was difficult to get names of victims in Calabar. Emotions were very high during the researchers interaction with residents of Uwanse Lane, Ikot Eshie and Ikot Ansa. The ultimate goal at that point in time was "survival". They were close to mentioning names but for fear of stigmatization they became restrained. It was pandemic attitude that threw caution to the wind.

## i. Sexual Relationship among Siblings

Calabar did not experience the extreme incidence of the COVID-19 pandemic as was the case in far away South Africa. Out of curiosity, the researchers indulged a few respondents to explain why the same ugly incident that surfaced in South Africa as a result of the pandemic did not occur in Calabar. There were two schools of thought to that effect.

This first school has it that in the case of Calabar, there was no total lockdown as was the case in other parts of the world. That way, people were moving about and having social interaction. There was no need for violent sexual desire that will be expressed on siblings.

The second school has it that the culture of the people forbids incest in all ramifications. It is an abomination to indulge in sexual relationship with siblings. As a matter of fact, it is unheard of in the land. From the benefits of hind sight, the school of thought that appears more pragmatic is the first school because when there was no total lockdown implying that there was social interaction amongst men and women, it was an apportunity to manage emotions. But for culture, unless of course there is a traditional worship of a deity to prevent the people from over indulgence the fear of the deity will create very high conscious level to manage one's emotions even in the secret.

## 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

A plague in whatever nomenclature is a harbinger of misfortune. The people will cry for the demise of their loved one's. There will be structural adjustments in the way and manner we interact with one another. Our promises become altered and our dreams shattered. We are compelled to live by instructions handed down by government to avoid the spread of the pandemic. COVID-19 pandemic plagued the entire world, it started as a problem of the developed world but little did we know that we shall not be spared. Before long, international flights were suspended followed by a ban on interstate travels around the country. Perhaps flights suspension and interstate travels ban would not have ached the common man but the domestic and social violence that accompanied the plague was worrisome. Hunger was brought upon the land, a phenomenon similar to the biblical famine that be fell the land of Egypt. Parents became beggars for the sake of children because they cannot bear to see them cry for food. The children do not know any pandemic. All they are concern about is food.

The case of Calabar according to this study did not degenerate to the extent of siblings having sexual relationship with one another as a result of the lockdown. However, Calabar was not spared the social violence that greeted the pandemic. There was Increased hunger and appetite for food albeit the skyrocketed cost of food items.

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Social limitations occasioned by social distancing aggravated emotional needs that began to be expressed rather negatively. We examined' the atmosphere that was created by this pandemic in Calabar. Oral tradition has it that a similar pandemic happened a hundred years ago. In our generation, we have had our own share of the COVID-19 pandemic. We explored the land of Calabar and we came forward with the following recommendations.

### 5. **Recommendations**

- Government should in future take the bull by the horns and ensure that citizens do not scamper for survival in the face of a pandemic of this nature. Adequate legislation's should be put in place abinitio to forestal hoarding of food items that we witnessed in our generation.
- Loss of jobs during a pandemic can be ameliorated if a census of victims is taken immediately and treated as victims of social welfare by the government.
- Government cannot ignore her social responsibility to the citizens during pandemics such as COVID-19. It is the duty of government to protect her citizens during periods of emergency. In our generation, our government failed.

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