

## An Assessment of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Nigeria

**Olajumoke Ganiyat Jenyo**

Research Fellow, National Defence College Nigeria

E-mail: [jenyoolajumoke@gmail.com](mailto:jenyoolajumoke@gmail.com),

### **ABSTRACT**

*The world was greeted with the official declaration of the Novel Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) Disease, also known as COVID-19 pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020. It was bad luck that the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, has put the world on public health alert and no country was spared of the effects of the pandemic. However, Sexual and Gender-based violence occurs in all around the world, within the households or in the larger community and these impact women and girl on unequal basis. Consequently, as Nigeria struggle over COVID-19 pandemic, new fact show sudden increase in sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), especially against women and girls. The purpose of this research study, therefore, is to identify and discuss the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on sexual and gender based violence in Nigeria. Feminist theory was adopted. This research work relied on both primary and secondary sources of data for both qualitative and quantitative analysis. In addition to the viewpoint of the authors, this paper undertook a review of the related literature regarding the Covid-19 pandemic and sexual and gender based violence. The review reveals that sexual and gender-based violence has been noted as a major international human rights abused and public health issue. Meanwhile, there has been a fairly Covid-19 pandemic focused reporting on the impacts of the crisis and limited research specific on sexual and gender based violence. More so, there is relatively poor data access about its frequency for cross-sectional analysis to learn women's and girls' experiences and perception of sexual and gender-based violence. The types and levels of sexual and gender-based violence that occurred were examined to determine critical implicating factors resulting in different types of sexual and gender-based violence. This paper has recommended some measures to be adopted by Nigerians and the Nigerian government in order to curtailing sexual and gender based violence against women and girls in the country with the devastating effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and similar pandemics in future.*

**Keywords:** Covid19 Pandemic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence, Women, Girl-child, Rape Victims, Poverty, Reproductive Health, Human Rights

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### **1. Introduction**

Coronavirus also known as the Covid19 Pandemic is a disease caused by novel virus with a characteristic of sporadic transmission with the speed of light. Its kind was experienced first in the 1960s with severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-COV). History avail us such prevalent and infectious diseases causing great harms to humanity by drastically reducing the population (WHO, 2020). According to Adhikari et al., 2020; Congressional Research Service., 2020; Harapan, Itoh, Yufika, Winardi, Keam, Te, et al., (2020) cited in Innocent,(2020), the world has been shocked by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic with The World Health Organization (WHO) announcing the outbreak of novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) at the beginning of the year 2020. Meanwhile, WHO said that, the disease was first reported in the city of Wuhan, China, in December

2019 and has since then spread like a wildfire to more than 190 countries. In other words, Covid19 was pronounced a public health diseases and a global pandemic. Ozili, (2020), observed that the pandemic has caused massive health, human right abuse and economic disruptions across the globe. Substantially, also Health Practioners, Human Right Groups and Economic Experts have all predicted that the pandemic could plunge the world into not just global economic recession, but devastating health challenges and human right abuses. Even though, the pandemic has claimed a significant number of lives young and old across the globe (Innocent, 2020; Adefolarin, 2020; Izili, 2020).

However, as previously encountered with the Ebola outbreak in West Africa from 2014 to 2016, and the 2015–2016 South American Zika virus epidemics, outbreaks like these has been noted to have consequences on gendered aspects, with women and girls disproportionately affected by the resulting health, social and economic downturns. For instance Korkoyah & Wreh, 2015; United Nations [UN] Women, 2020; Wenham et al., (2020) cited in Bianca and Errolyn (2020) in their respective studies report that during pandemic, gendered norms endanger women and placing them in disadvantage position of less than men to have power in decision making around the pandemic because of their principal roles as caregivers within families, front-line health-care workers and are more likely to suffer as their needs largely unmet.

Coincidentally, the UN Women, (2020), raised the alarm over the rapid increasing incidence of sexual and gender based violence against women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic, so much so that, the Executive Director of UN Women Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, decried and highlighted these concerns abuses as a shadow pandemic, escalating during the chaos of the COVID-19 global crisis. Moreso, Dienne and Gbeneol, (2008) observed that sexual and gender-based violence is a worldwide problem that cuts across cultures, class, ethnicity and age. It was estimated that globally 50% of women have experienced sexual and gender based violence and this is more pronounced in Africa. Ani, (2012), noted that like other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, sexual and gender -based violence is a problem in Nigeria, probably due to the structures of domination and exploitation often peddled through the concept of patriarchy. Women are faced daily with the challenge of sexual and gender-based violence which is a rampant thing in Nigeria today. Incidentally, the emerging evidence of rapid increase of sexual and gender based violence due to overlapping vulnerabilities that increase women' and girls susceptibility to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, particularly within the Nigerian context, has negative threat to their life and opportunities. These impacts will have consequences that will ripple across communities and the whole country as Nigeria begins to recover from the detrimental economic and health impacts of the crisis (UN Women, UNFPA, UNODC, UNICEF UN System in Nigeria, 2020).

In addition, women and girls are disproportionately affected by sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), although sexual violence against men and boys also occur, particularly in conflict-affected contexts. Service providers in the North East of Nigeria, for instance, have observed incidents of sexual violence towards men and boys. However, male survivors are less likely than women to report an incident of sexual violence (UNFPA and IPPF (2017). Coincidentally, women both married and unmarried, as well as girls have been subjected to vicious attacks from men. They have been rape, sexually assaulted, brutalized, battered, and killed .Sexual and gender based violence on women and girls have in recent times been on the increase in Nigeria, with victims embarrassed and not having the courage to speak out or report such incidences to the right agencies for justice. In fact, for instance the Amnesty International (2005) report on Nigeria more than a decade ago indicate and attest to this as follows:

*“On a daily basis, women are beaten and ill-treated for supposed transgressions, raped and even murdered by members of their family. In some cases, vicious acid attacks leave them with horrific disfigurements. Such violence is too frequently excused and tolerated in communities and not denounced. Husbands, partners and fathers are responsible for most of the violence against women”.*

The observed concern of this research work therefore is gear toward examining the impact of covid19 pandemic on sexual and gender based violence recommending measures to explicitly addressed and to be adopted by Nigerians and the Nigerian government in order to curtailing sexual and gender based violence against women and girls in the country as well as with effectiveness of the relevant policies made to checkmate these rampage and abuses. Moreover, the findings from the study could be used to advocate for gender tolerance and to inform and formulate proactive, preventive measures and mechanism targeted against sexual and gender based violence with the devastating effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and similar pandemics in future.

## 2. Theoretical Insight

Discussions on covid19 pandemic impact on sexual and gender based violence require some level of theoretical insight for us to grasp the imperative of research objective. This is necessary for more in-depth exposition and understanding of the study. The feminist theory is the ideal theory for this analysis and explanation. In the word of Eme, (2015), Feminist theory is one of the major contemporary and leading theories of gender studies which analyze the status of women and men in society with the purpose of using that knowledge to better women's lives. He went further to allude that for instance Feminist theorists also question the differences between women, including how race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, and age intersect with gender. This scholar added that Feminist theory is most concerned with giving a voice to women and highlighting the various ways women have contributed to society and on the other hand been affected.

Essentially, the feminist theory explanation of issues on gender comes through various theoretical formulations. For instance, the gender difference perspective examines women's location in, and experience of, social situations differ from men's. Another is the, cultural feminists that look into the different values associated with womanhood and femininity to juxtapose the reason why men and women experience the social world differently. Other good examples of feminist theorists explain the different roles assigned to women and men within institutions by analyzing the gender difference, sexual division of labor in the household. For instance, not left out is the Existential and phenomenological feminist's theory that focus on how women have been marginalized. This strand of feminist theory describes this as the “other” in patriarchal societies. In this wise, women are therefore seen as an objects and not allow the opportunity for self-realization and development (Eme, 2015).

However, Eme (2015) said there are three (3) main types of feminist theory that are used in an attempt to explain the societal differences between men and women, this are gender inequality, gender oppression, and structural oppression. These three quite relate to this research study and will be useful to the study analysis.

**Gender Inequality:** According to liberal feminists, the sexual division of labor in both the public and private spheres needs to be altered in order for women to achieve equality. This for instance give credence to Gender-inequality theories strand of the feminist theory that recognize women's location

in, and experience of, social situations are not only different but also unequal to men's. More so, the Liberal feminists argue that women have the same capacity as men for moral reasoning and agency, but that patriarchy, particularly the sexist patterning of the division of labor, has historically denied women the opportunity to express and practice this reasoning. They further said that women have been isolated to the private sphere of the household and, therefore, they exist without a voice in the public sphere. They assert that, even when women find themselves in public sphere, they are expected to handle the private sphere quietly and still manage in taking care of family and household duties as well as child rearing. In addition to this, Liberal feminists allude to the point that marriage remain a site of gender inequality and that women are at the disadvantage position in marriage to men that benefits more. To this end, it has been discover that married women have higher levels of stress and fatigue than unmarried women and married men in this context (Eme, 2015).

**Gender Oppression:** This strand of feminist theory emerges with power as it key variable with development of the two main theories of gender oppression: psychoanalytic feminism and radical feminism. For instance, according to Psychoanalytic feminists that attempt to explain power relations between men and women by improving Freud's theories of the subconscious and unconscious, human emotions, and childhood development. This theory, noted that the feeling from the conscious calculation cannot fully explain the production and reproduction of patriarchy. However on the other hand, the Radical feminists contend more critically by saying that being a woman is a positive thing in and of it, but that this is not recognize neither acknowledged in patriarchal societies as women are suppressed and oppressed. Particularly, the Radical theories identify physical violence as being at the base of patriarchy, but they believe that patriarchy can be overcome if women recognize their own value and strength, establish a sisterhood of trust with other women, confront oppression critically, and form female separatist networks in the private and public spheres This strand of feminist theory is very unique in it analysis as it went further than theories of gender inequality by asserting that women are actively oppressed, subordinated, and abused by men, as a result of the yoke of differences and unequal placed on them (Eme,2015).

**Structural Oppression:** The structural oppression theory strand of feminist theory provides imperative insight that not all women experience oppression in the same way and equally. They argue that for example white women and black women face different forms of discrimination at workplace differently. Incidentally the Structural oppression theories, derives is position from Marxism, as it further contends that women's oppression and inequality are as a result of capitalism, patriarchy, and racism. Likewise the Socialist feminists agree with Karl Marx and Frederic Engels that the working class is exploited as a consequence of the capitalist mode of production, but they seek to extend this exploitation not just to class but also to gender. While, the Inter-sectionality theorists seek to explain oppression and inequality across a variety of variables, including class, gender, race, ethnicity, and age. Scholar such as Patricia Hill Collins that develops, deployed, and popularizing the inter-sectionality theory in her research work lead in this regards. Therefore, from this angle, different groups of women come to view the world through a shared standpoint of "heterogeneous commonality "(Eme, 2015).

In this context, sexual and gender based violence occurs as result of gender inequality, gender oppression and structural oppression women and girls are subjected to, even in this era covid19 pandemic. The feminist through and its strands locate the disappropriation, disadvantage and abuse inherent in society because it reproof the forces of sexual and gender based violence interest therein.

### **3. Literature Review**

Covid19 has been described by The World Health Organization (WHO), as viral infection that causes respiratory illness. The disease is said to be transmitted from person to person through contact with droplet of an infected person. More so, infected people can easily recover from the illness with specialized treatment, but people who are older and those with existing medical conditions such as cancer, chronic respiratory infections, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases are more likely to experience severe illness and death due to COVID-19 (World Health Organisation,2020).In the same vein, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (MFMER) (2020), World Vision (2020) noted that, that the virus, SARS Cov2 is the main causative organism of COVID-19,is shortness of breath, dry cough and fever as its most common symptoms.

In addition, The New Humanitarian (2020) observed that COVID-19 as a disease is underscored by its potential to infect, hospitalized and cause death of many persons within the shortest time frame if they are not protected against it. Similarly, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDPC) (2020) maintained that COVID-19 is ordinarily difficult to prevent and control, therefore, the best way of thwarting it is by adopting measures that will reduce exposure to the virus that causes the disease. It is for these reasons that World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a public health emergency of international concern. Much more so as vaccine is still on research clinical testing stages around the world, but the disease keeps spreading and the world in a state of second wave fear and confusions.

As noted by the United Nation Human Rights Office of the High Commission (2014) that Sexual violence is a form of gender-based violence and encompasses any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting. The UNHR added that, sexual violence takes multiple forms and includes rape, sexual abuse, forced pregnancy, forced sterilization, forced abortion, forced prostitution, trafficking, sexual enslavement, forced circumcision, castration and forced nudity. Meanwhile UNHR further observed that sexual and gender-based violence is considered to be any harmful act directed against individuals or groups of individuals on the basis of their gender. And this may include sexual and gender based violence, domestic violence, trafficking, forced/early marriage and harmful traditional practices (UNHR, 2014).

Given the protracted nature of the side effects of sexual and gender based violence on women and girls, scientific literature has provided numerous empirical review studies for us to appreciate. McCloskey et al., (2005) was of the view that, forced marriage, child marriage, denial of right to choose spouse, denial of right to own property, female genital mutilation, rape, refusal to permit women to work as well as control their own income, verbal abuse incest among others are priority issues of sex and gender based violence. In addition however, unions that are either explicitly polygamous or implicitly polygamous because of extramarital relationships on the part of the men are more likely than monogamous unions to be characterized more by intimate sexual and gender based violence (Eme, 2015).

Moreover it has been argue by Gage, (2005) that women and girls are sometime restricted from a relationship with the wide community such as friends" colleagues or relatives, seeing women as incompetent, worthless, or inferior to men, girls trafficking with intention of using them as commercial sex workers. He provides a big picture and incidences that take place such as physical assaults imposed on widows indirectly regarded as widow's rites. While he noted that despite the

increasing recognition that sexual and gender based violence that happens among intimate partners is a global public health concern, population-based studies of intimate partner against women, its determinants, and consequences remain valid in developing countries.

According to WHO (2002), about one third of all the women in Nigeria had at one time or the other been a victim of sexual and gender violence in its divers form. Collaborating the above, Eme (2015), state that the prevalence violence against women or girl child is within the family. He was of the view that the determinants of sexual violence against Nigerian women happens in marital dyads in general, as well as its consequences on reproductive health, are yet to be established. To him there is much that remains to be understood about the total set of possible negative sexual and reproductive health outcomes associated with intimate partner sexual and gender based violence.

However, Nigeria interest in studying and proffering solution to the problem of sexual and gender based violence is increasing as researchers are beginning to record the prevalence and interrogates its effects on women and girls (Funmi,2018; Eme,2015; Odeh and Umoh,2014 ;Zubairu,et al (2011); Jekayinka (2010);Clifford et al,2010; Olagbegi and Afolabi (2010); Obi and Ozumba, (2007); Murzi (2004); Okemgbo *et al.* 2002; Kisseka and Otesanya, 1988; Odimegwu, 1998; OAU, 1998; Odunjirin 1993; Sogbetun and Osoba, 1977). These attempts by this various scholars in their own standing investigating sexual and gender based violence in Nigeria were engage not in pandemic era. This is the gap this present research study intends to fill.

#### **4. Impact Of Covid19 Pandemic on Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Nigeria**

According to the IGC Report, (2020) covid19 pandemic disease outbreaks threaten populations' health, requiring the aggressive response measures of governments, such as lockdowns for instance increase women and girls' vulnerability to violence. Coincidentally, governments across the world imposed lockdowns to fight the COVID-19 pandemic; countries have witnessed a rise in reports of sexual and gender-based violence. From the UK and US, to Singapore and China, authorities have reported increasing cases of sexual and gender based violence and demand for emergency shelter. There is rightfully major concern regarding the situation in many developing countries, where there is often an unfortunate widespread societal acceptance of sexual and gender-based violence.

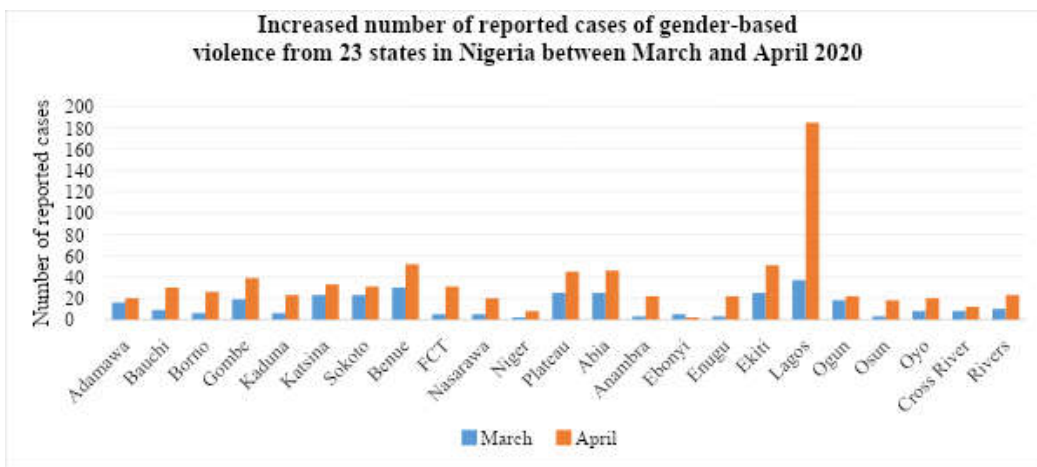
The federal government of Nigeria responded with lockdown on March 30, 2020 by restricting movements of persons in the country's capital Abuja, as well as in Lagos and Ogun States, as measures to curtail covi19 pandemic spread. Subsequently, this measure targeted at preventing the disease in spreading, the reverse was the case as it lead to the phenomenal increased in sexual and gender based violence across the country, apart from crippling the economy and thus increase poverty level. Nigeria has long been facing sexual and gender-based violence crisis, with 30% of women and girls aged 15-49 having experienced sexual abuse. Lack of coordination amongst key stakeholders and poor implementation of legal frameworks, combined with entrenched gender discriminatory norms, and has hampered government and civil society efforts to address sexual and gender-based violence. These efforts have been further compromised by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has seen the diversion of priorities and resources and resulted in a surge of reports of sexual and gender-based violence because of Federal Government imposed lockdowns in Lagos, the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja), and Ogun State.

Consequent to this in Nigeria is a series of high-profile cases of violence perpetrated against women during the four-month lockdown sparked nationwide protests by activists both online and at in-person rallies; this led to the Governors of Nigeria's 36 states unanimously declaring a state of

emergency on SGBV. However, the reports by different organizations show that there has been a notable increase in the number of reported cases of SGBV in May 2020 to June 2020 across most states in Nigeria For instance; The United Nations Women described the increase in SGBV due to Covid-19 as a “Shadow Pandemic” from the graph below (UN Women, 2020).

The reports of sexual and gender based violence in Nigeria are following the lockdown put in place across the country on 30 March, reported cases of sexual and gender-based violence have substantially risen. The table below shows the number of reported cases in March and April, respectively, for 23 out of 36 states in Nigeria in which data are available. This shows a monthly increase of 149% in reports of gender-based violence following the introduction of lockdowns at the end of March and April, 2020.

Figure 1: Reported cases of gender-based violence in Nigeria, March and April 2020



Sources, United Nation Women, 2020.

Moreover, breaking down the data by state lines, the effect of lockdowns becomes even more apparent. The Federal Government only decided to place Lagos state, Ogun state, and the Federal Capital Territory under full lockdowns. This was expanded to include Kano state, the most populous city in the North of the country, in mid-April. State governments elsewhere in the country tended to implement some lockdown restrictions, but these were not as strict as the ones imposed by the Federal Government. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) has been a crisis in Nigeria for a long time (UN Women, 2020). The lockdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic seems to worsen the situation. This is because prior to the pandemic, partners who had a tendency to be abusive were engaged in activities which took them outside their homes. However, with the restriction of movements due to the pandemic, couples are compelled to stay at home together for weeks, creating additional tensions, perhaps leading to people becoming frustrated and aggressive.

Table 2: Number of reported cases of gender-based violence in Nigeria during March and April 2020 by state and geopolitical zone

Geopolitical Zone	States	Number of cases per States		Number of cases per Geopolitical zone		Total
		March	April	March	April	
North East	Adamawa	16	20	50	115	165
	Bauchi	9	30			
	Borno	6	20			
	Gombe	19	39			
North West	Kaduna	6	23	52	87	139
	Katsina	23	33			
	Sokoto	23	31			
North Central	Benue	30	52	67	156	223
	FCT	5	31			
	Nasarawa	5	20			
	Niger	2	8			
	Plateau	25	45			
South East	Abia	25	46	36	92	128
	Anambra	3	22			
	Ebonyi	5	2			
	Enugu	3	22			
South West	Lagos	37	185	91	296	387
	Ekiti	25	51			
	Ogun	18	22			
	Osun	3	18			
	Oyo	8	20			
South South	Cross River	8	12	18	35	53
	Rivers	10	23			

Source: Federal and State Ministries of Women Affairs, 2020

The above table 2 explicitly provides a vivid break down of reported cases of sexual and gender based violence during the covid19 lockdown period in Nigeria. We can grasp the level of impact of how the covid19 induce restriction on Nigeria from the six geopolitical zones and from each states occurrences of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV). The UN Women, UNFPA, UNODC, UNICEF UN System in Nigeria, (2020) noted that the situation in Nigeria reflects the global trend of increased gender-based violence. SGBV is reported to have significantly increased since the lockdown began in the three most affected areas (Lagos State, FCT and Ogun State) on 30 March 2020. For Instance, they said the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team reported a three-fold increase in the number of telephone calls received through their hotlines in one month. In particular, service providers have reported sharp increases in cases of intimate partner violence



and domestic violence. Other states have implemented similar lockdown measures, resulting in increased incidence of GBV (Table 1).

Furthermore, data from foregoing shows a general increase in SGBV across all six geopolitical zones (Table 1). Data on reported incidents of SGBV cases in Nigeria based on preliminary information from 24 states shows that in March, the total number of SGBV incidents reported were 346, while in the first part of April, incident reports spiked to 794, depicting a 56 per cent increase in just two weeks of lockdown. Some of these incidents of violence have tragically resulted in the death of victims, the rape of children, including incestual rape, and tenant–landlord assault. However the below table 2 present to us the link us the prevalence of SGBV lockdown state and some none lockdown states.

*Table 2: Reported cases of gender-based violence in the Federal Capital Territory, Lagos, Ogun, Benue, Ebonyi, and Cross River states, March and April 2020*

Geopolitical Zone	States	Number of cases per States		Total
		March	April	
South West	Lagos	37	185	222
	Ogun	22	40	40
North Central	Benue	30	52	82
	FCT	5	31	36
South East	Ebonyi	2	22	24
South South	Cross River	8	12	20

*Source: Federal and State Ministries of Women Affairs, 2020*

Looking at the three states placed under full lockdown by the Federal Government, the increase in reports of sexual and gender based violence cases in April was even more profound, as highlighted in table 3. In these three states, the number of cases rose from 60 in March to 238 in April, an increase of 297%. By contrast, in Benue, Ebonyi, and Cross River states, which were placed under less stringent lockdowns by their respective local governments, the increase in cases was only 53% between March and April. In fact, in Ebonyi state, where the governor refused to place the state under total lockdown, the number of cases decreased from March to April.

Moreover, as part of the lockdown measure resulting in the prolonged school closures that put young and adolescent girls at increased risk of child marriage and teenage pregnancy. In Nigeria, the IGC REPORT (2020) noted that 18 million female learners have been affected by school closures. Early marriage is already widespread in Nigeria, with 44% of girls married before the age of 18. In a context where girls' education is already undervalued, and families are forced to make sacrifices due to economic constraints such as prioritizing boys' education, the option of marrying girls off to wealthy men is likely to seem more appealing. In the similar vein, the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) predicts that an additional 13 million child marriages will take place globally in the next 10 years that would have otherwise been prevented due to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Adding that with the third highest absolute number of child brides in the world, Nigeria is at risk of bearing many of these additional child marriages.

As observed The UN Women, UNFPA, UNODC, UNICEF UN System in Nigeria, (2020), that federal and state governments Nigeria put the lockdown restrictions measures in place to contain the spread of the virus, but survivors of SGBV abuse have found themselves confined in their homes with abusers for weeks on end. This assertion is borne out in the evidence of reported on various forms of sexual and gender based violence that women and girls of all ages and walks of life suffers as results of impact of covid19 pandemic.

### **5. Covid19 and Types and Levels of SGBV in Nigeria**

According to the UN Women, UNFPA, UNODC, UNICEF UN System in Nigeria, (2020) briefing paper that maintained that as Nigeria begins to feel the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak's interactions with limited health-care infrastructure and multiple pre-existing inequalities and fragilities, the emergence of the Shadow Pandemic of GBV also threatens the health and well-being of already vulnerable women and girls. It added that due to pre-existing inequalities and vulnerabilities, groups of women and girls face heightened risks of experiencing SGBV during the COVID-19 pandemic. It further listed the groups to include refugees and internally displaced persons, women and girls living with disabilities, and informal workers. However, that vulnerable from this study also showed that house wives, students, elderly women and single matures ladies are at greater risk of SGBV.

The COVID-19 pandemic apart from the resulting loss of income and huge household stress suffer by women and girls, in addition to this has presented prevalence of SGBV challenges in the contexts of increased risks of domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as barriers to help-seeking options for survivors (UNFPA Global Site Report,2020). Given this finding, It would be imperative to highlights the types of SGBV that occurred irrespective of timeframe (lifetime or current) doing the covid19 pandemic restrictions lockdown in Nigeria. This includes as follows:

#### **Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence refers to intentional and persistent abuse of anyone in the home in a way that causes pain, distress or injury. It is also refers to any abusive treatment of one family member by another, thus violating the law of basic human rights. Physical abuse is a pattern of physical assaults and threats used to control another person. For instance domestic violence as an abuse can be committed by a spouse, a former spouse, a fiancée, a boyfriend or girlfriend, and someone who cohabits with the victim. Most often, women and children are the victims, but men can also be victims of domestic violence (Odeh and Umoh, 2014).

#### **Intimate Partner Violence**

Intimate partner violence is considered to be a private issue about which the community should not intervene. This comes in the forms of wife beating as a result surveyed women agree that a man is justified in beating his wife in some cases, including if she burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children, or refuses to have sexual intercourse with him (NPC and ICF International 2014). The high prevalence of wife beating, emotional and economic abuse, and marital rape, along psychological abused of many Nigerian women and girls. Given these positions, intimate partner violence should be considered a serious offence against women.

#### **Sexual Rape and Incest**

This is another types of SGBV that comes in the form of is sexual assault. In this case sexual assault could be in form of individual-rape, gang-rape, unwanted fondling of feminine body, verbal assault,

etc. Some of this type of SGBV against women and girls takes place both in peace and conflict times (Ani, 2013).

### **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

According to Ahmadu (2000) FGM as sexual and gender violence against women and girls stems from the mutilation female body and it remains the height of sexual and gender violence on a girl-child. He added by saying that which it part of the conspiracy of patriarchy nature of the Nigerian state and African culture, to deprive the woman of the control of her body and sexual enjoyment. Adebayo, (2007) posit that Female genital mutilation is a tradition that is widely practiced across Africa. This is due to the fact that sexual rights are a fundamental aspect of human rights, which includes the right to experience a pleasurable sexuality. He see it an important means of communication and love between people.

### **Underage/Forced Marriage**

In the word of Oduah, (2014) early marriage sometimes called under age and forced marriage is withdrawal of girl child from school or denial of right to choose a spouse and stand as is an act of violence against the, female child. The incidence of early marriage is high in Nigeria. He maintain that in some regions, customary law allows girls to marry from the age of only nine years; such marriages are traditionally frowned at in some states, but remain common, especially in Northern Nigeria. A global struggle group spotlighted the plight of girls, who have become one of the world's most vulnerable people, especially the uneducated girls and Nigeria has a lot of them (Abdullahi and Buba, 2009).

### **Sex and Human Trafficking**

Nnadi (2013) stated that one of the ugly faces of the violations of women rights is the issue it is very rampant. Meanwhile, the causes of trafficking are numerous. They include poverty, desperation to escape violence, corruption, unemployment, illiteracy and ignorance, etc. of human trafficking. Sex trafficking is viewed as an aspect of human trafficking that is becoming pandemic in society today. It is seen as the fastest growing women rights violation in the world. It has generated a lot of concern worldwide and especially in Nigeria where this is pronounced.

### **Violence against Women and Girls with Disabilities**

Women and girls with disabilities are more likely to experience SGBV and less able to escape, less likely to speak up, less likely to be believed. More so they are less likely to find services they can access for their sustenance (health, education and economic wise) . For instance, they can experience verbal, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse from caregivers, family members, colleagues, security agents, classmates, and friends.

### **Violence against Widows**

Baobab, (2012), observed that widowhood in Nigeria expose women to psychological and physical abuse as well as a whole range of health related problems including HIV/AIDs. In the same vein Genyi and Genyi (2013), said widows been affected by financial, psychological, sexual violence. However the UN, (2001) noted that the diverse cultures in Nigeria exhibit harmful traditional widowhood practices which have called for global attention in the struggle against violence on women. For a woman who has just been bereaved of her husband, death stings, strips her bare and exposes her to humiliating physical and psychological violence; often in the name of culture, usually by those who should console her and support her in her time of bereavement (Odeh and Umoh, 2014).

## **6. Critical Implicating Factors Resulting from SGBV**

SGBV has serious short- and long-term consequences on women's physical, sexual and reproductive and mental health as well as on their personal and social well-being. The health consequences of violence against women include injuries, untimed/unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections including HIV, pelvic pain, urinary tract infections, fistula, genital injuries, pregnancy complications, and chronic conditions. Mental health impacts for survivors of gender-based violence include Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, substance misuse, self-harm and suicidal behavior, and sleep disturbances.

In addition, a survivor of GBV may also face stigma and rejection from her community and family. The effects of Gender-based violence can be devastating. They pose danger to a woman and girls reproductive health and can scar a survivor psychologically, cognitively and interpersonally. A woman who experiences violence and lives in an abusive relationship with her partner may be forced to become pregnant or have an abortion against her will, or her partner may knowingly expose her to a sexually transmitted infection.

Another is the girl a child psychology is parentally affected as result of SGBV .For instance girl child who has undergone or witnessed SGBV may become withdrawn, anxious, or depressed on one hand; on the other hand, the child may become aggressive and exert control over younger siblings. The effects of sexual abuse are the exploitation of power. Young people are especially at risk and this can have lasting consequences for their sexual and productive health (Eme, 2015). Furthermore, the issues unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STI), physical injury, and trauma. The effects of female Genital cutting (FGC) are life time injury to girl child.

More so, SGBV against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objective of equality, development, and peace.” SGBV against women and girls is a problem that limits girl child education, causes poor enrolment and attendants in primary and secondary schools. For example the girl children may continue to face many obstacles that impede their part to learning. The UNICEF,(2013) allude to the facts that in some parts of Nigeria it is believed that enrolling girls for formal education is a waste of time and resources, as she would be married off sooner or later. This notion comes from the religion belief, cultural aspects like forced marriage, inheritance law, sexual harassment, unintended pregnancy, and domestic responsibilities tend to conflicts with enrolment and attendance of girls in schools.

SGBV has serious impact on the mental health of women making them suffer shock and emotional instability, while the girls consequently suffer from poor academic performance in school. The WHO, (2010) collaborate the above by saying that that abused girls are more likely to suffer depression, anxiety, psychosomatics symptoms. This however, reinforces the stance that SGBV against the girl child affect their ability to learn or even the willingness to take part in school activities; therefore exposing them to serious dangers in life.

## **7. Conclusion**

The impact of covid19 pandemic on Sexual and Gender based violence in Nigeria was a huge phenomenon that birthed a new reality to the understanding of pandemic of such nature, especially as it affects against women and girls largely. Although covid19 pandemic was a global public health crisis, but it proves it impacts goes beyond health and economic as it was first assumed. Sexual and Gender based violence became part of the challenges brought about by the measures put in place to stop the spread of covid19 novel virus. However, SGBV is an obstacle women and girl living to

peacefully and a threat to the progress they supposed to enjoy in equality with men. More so, SGBV appears as through practices that relegate women and girls as mere sex object emerging from tradition, customs, social order, and religious belief that exist to lower the status women in our society, this has been reinforced by covid19 pandemic through government lockdown restrictions. The implications are most likely to impair both women and girl child inability to ascertain their role as equal partner in society ladder of progress as well risk of health challenges. In consequence therefore, we expect total check on this trends checked by all the agencies concerned. Also the federal, states and local government as well as all other none state should condemn any iota of sexual and gender based violence against women and girls make the laws effective laws in protecting and preventing the acts of SGBV against our mothers and sister, young and old in the country.

### **8. Recommendations**

Sexual and Gender based violence is an acts that showed high level of discrimination against women and girls in our society. Theoretical exposition, has provide in-depth understanding that unequal power relations between men and women lead to perpetual domination of men over women who manifest that manifested in forced subordinating position compared with men. This research work provides a study on the impact of covid19 pandemic on sexual and gender based violence in Nigeria (SGBV). It argues that while there is greater acknowledgement of Covid19 pandemic is a global crisis, the outbreak of the novel virus results in the higher increased of SGBV in Nigeria, as women and girls been the victim and survivors. The study analysis data recorded doing the lockdown restrictions that showed the prevalence of SGBV across states in Nigeria. This data is to provide real-time analysis to inform either short- and long-term national response. Thus, the following recommendations have been proffered:

1. Nigerian Government should refrain from invoking any tradition or religious considerations as stated out in the declaration of UN General Assembly act on elimination of violence against women.
2. Nigerian Government must ensure that women are considered in the scheme of things in the allocation of office positions. In terms of program intervention, strategies to combat domestic violence must attack the root causes of the problem in addition to treating the symptoms.
3. Nigerian Government should ensure that policy and programs are formulated aimed at eliminating gender based violence in Nigeria. Improving women's sexual and reproductive health has been a key objective of all governments
4. There should be compulsory education of girl child in our society instead of enforcing them to marry.
5. There should a joint effort between state actors and non-state actors should effectively campaign through the media programs on the awareness of violence eradication.
6. Penal laws with administrative sanctions in the legislations should be reinforced.
7. In addition, any act of SGBV against women and girls in our society should be condemned entirely. Therefore Nigeria is called upon to be part and parcel of the global trend towards equality. We should demonstrate more sensitivity towards the plight of Nigerian women by implementing all the recommendations in this paper.
8. More so, stakeholders in the Nigerian Project ranging from government, religious bodies, civil society groups, and community leaders must embark on vigorous creation of awareness and education on the negative implications of gender based violence and growth development of women in the society.
9. There is need to facilitate a training program for the legislators both at national and state assembly, the judiciary, the police, and other government agencies to help enact relevant laws which will

eradicate gender based violence in Nigeria. This will go a long ways put an end in treating issues of gender based violence as trivial family issues, but as an issue of serious national concern.

10. Empowerment of women both economic and education wise to lessen the vulnerability of violence. All statutory religious and customary laws where it exist which promote gender based violence against women should be abolished, on the other hands, perpetrators of it must be severely punished to serve as deterrence to others who may nurse such tendency.

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