

COVID-19 LOCKDOWN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG PARTNERS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study were to examine if COVID-19 will lead to physical violence, emotional violence and sexual violence among partners in Nigeria. A descriptive research design of survey type was employed for this study. One hundred and twenty six (126) respondents were sampled for the study. Researchers developed questionnaire validated by experts in related areas of study were used for the study and was tested for reliability for the study. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages for demographical data of the respondents while t-test was used to test the hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings from this study revealed that: COVID-19 lockdown leads to physical violence among partners in Nigeria. This was because P-calculated value was 0.00, which is lesser than 0.05 level of significance, COVID-19 lockdown leads to emotional violence among partners in Nigeria. This was because P-calculated value was 0.00, which is lesser than 0.05 level of significance, COVID-19 lockdown leads to sexual violence among partners in Nigeria. This was because P-calculated value was 0.00, which is lesser than 0.05 level of significance. The study concluded that COVID-19 lockdown lead to physical, emotional, and sexual violence among partners on Nigeria, it was recommended that couples should try to manage the situation of lockdown and settles matters among themselves in order to avoid physical violence, there should be increase in counseling services on right of women for couples as for them to be able to manage issues among themselves, couples should abide by guidance of sex education expert and avoid the lockdown to push them in sexual violence.

Keywords: Physical violence, Emotional violence, Sexual violence, COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

According to World Health Organization (WHO) (2012), Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is part of the most common forms of violence against women. This includes physical violence, sexual violence, emotional abuse and dominating behaviors by an intimate partner. This cuts across many settings including socio-economic, religious and cultural settings. The overwhelming global burden of IPV is mostly borne by

women. Although, they are instances where there's violence against men in relationships, it is however minute compared to women. Most cases of violence against men often occur in form of self-defense. Violence in relationships sometimes occurs between same sex partners however, the most common perpetrators of violence against women are male intimate partners or ex-lovers. (Balogun, Owoaje, & Fawole 2012).

IPV can be defined as any behavior within an intimate relationship or amongst partners that causes or leads to physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship. Such behaviors includes but not limited to; Acts of physical violence; such as slapping, hitting, kicking and beating, Sexual violence; including forced sexual intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion, Emotional (psychological) abuse; such as insults, belittling, constant humiliation, intimidation, threats of harm, threats to take away children, and Controlling behaviors; including isolating a person from family and friends, monitoring their movements, restricting access to financial resources, employment, education or medical care. (WHO, 2012).

Whilst disease outbreaks threaten populations' health, the aggressive response measures of governments, such as lockdowns, often increase women and girls' vulnerability to violence. Indeed, since governments across the world began imposing lockdowns to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, countries have witnessed a rise in reports of gender-based violence. From the UK and US, to Singapore and China, Authorities have reported significant increase in cases of domestic violence especially emotional where some girls or housewives are being deprive of their right. There is rightfully major concern regarding the situation in many developing countries, where there is often an unfortunate widespread societal acceptance of gender-based violence. (International Growth Center (IGC), 2020).

The most prevalent acts of violence against women in Nigeria includes; sexual violence, physical violence, harmful traditional practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), emotional or psychological violence, and socio-economic violence. Victims of these incidents face additional challenge with the lack of structural social service systems in place in Nigeria, access to hotlines and shelters, civil society groups and non-government organizations that are specialized in providing support and legal expertise been few in number. (Umukoro, 2020).

"The lockdown itself has become the trigger, from what we have been seeing in terms of statistics of the COVID-19 spread across the world, the lockdown has become a major challenge in the sense that women who ordinarily go to work in the morning and come back in the evening are now being locked down with an abuser they've been living with and have been trying as much as possible to avoid overtime." This statement was made by Mrs. Akiode Afolabi, who is the Director of Lagos based Women Advocates Research and Documentation Center.

These attacks have also grown in other African countries. In Cote D'Ivoire where the

government's response to COVID-19 is a partial lockdown, Barbara Sangare, a gender activist and coordinator of WPS Tool, said gender violence has increased. The gender activist narrated how a woman was thrown from the third floor of a tall building in the capital state of the country Abidjan, after being beaten late at night by her partner. Unfortunately, due to the nation's curfew, she could not get help until the police came to pick her up in the morning.

"We must remember that domestic violence thrives because one party wants to control or dominate the other. We have instances where because there's a lack of control, you now have the violence that is meted out in the form of physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, economic, or otherwise. Reasons given in defense for domestic violence ranges from; lack of effective communication between parties, unrealistic expectations of marriage, or lack of sexual satisfaction. The inability to express lack of sexual satisfaction can also degenerate to violence. Other reasons include financial pressure or burdens. In some cases, when a financially empowered woman is in a relationship with a partner with lower income and low self-esteem – this power dynamic can become an issue with a partner already suffering from low self-esteem coupled with poor communication." – Mrs. Titilola Vivour-Adeniyi

Governments all across the world have imposed lockdowns to contain the deadly Corona virus disease, (COVID-19). However, the same restriction has increased the risks associated with domestic violence, especially for women. All around the world, governments have imposed on residents to stay at home for protection against the novel COVID-19, but for domestic violence victims, the vast majority of whom are women, children, and LGBTQ+ individuals, home turns out to be a dangerous place (Umukoro, 2020).

Data sourced from many regions already indicates significant increase in domestic violence cases across many Nations, particularly among marginalized populations such as Middle East and North Africa. These countries unfortunately have the world's fewest laws protecting women from domestic violence. An analysis by United Nations (UN) Women of the gendered impacts of COVID-19 in the Palestinian territories found an increase in gender-based violence, and warned that the pandemic will likely disproportionately affect women, exacerbate preexisting gendered risks and vulnerabilities, and widen inequalities. In Latin American countries such as Mexico and Brazil, experienced an increase in calls to Authorities hotlines, this indicates an increase in domestic abuse. However, a drop in formal complaints in countries such as Chile and Bolivia is most likely due to restrictions and the inability of women to seek help or report through official channels. In China, Police Officers in the city of Jingzhou received three times as many domestic violence calls in February 2020 compared to February 2019. Developed countries, such as Australia, France, Germany, South Africa, and the United States, also reported significant increase in reports of domestic violence since the COVID-19 outbreak. (Bettinger-Lopez & Bro, 2020).

It is crucial to note that domestic violence was a global pandemic long before the

COVID-19 outbreak. According to data collected by the UN, 243 million women and girls within 15-49 worldwide have been subjected to sexual or physical violence by an intimate partner in the space of One year. It is safe to say, one in three (1:3) women has experienced physical or sexual violence at some point in her life but the cases as increased due to COVID-19. (Bettinger-Lopez & Bro, 2020).

“For many women and girls, the threat looms largest where they should be safest. In their own homes... We know lockdowns and quarantines are essential to suppressing COVID-19. But they can trap women with abusive partners.” This statement was made by the UN Secretary, Gen. António Guterres in an interview regarding sexual violence amidst COVID-19.

A woman of Palestine Nationality in Al-Bureij camp, which happens to be one of the poorest and most crowded camps in the Gaza Strip, had for a long time been verbally and physically abused by her husband. The situation took a turn for the worse under the COVID-19 pandemic. This resulted in the abuse becoming a daily occurrence.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) report the statement “Sometimes I feel that this is a nightmare that I will eventually wake up from, but the nightmare is never-ending and I do not know how much longer I can handle this.” She also said she felt the quiet war her ex-husband was waging against her escalated under quarantine. Both living in the same apartment with their two children in Kyiv, Ukraine, she felt she had no escape from his abuse. She was afraid to seek help, knowing he might eavesdrop on her phone calls. She is among the hundreds of millions of victims of violence against women and girls, which has intensified since the outbreak of COVID-19. (The United Nations Department of Global Communications [DGC], 2020).

According to The UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) (2020), domestic violence is one of the greatest human rights violations. Some 243 million women and girls (aged 15-49) have been subjected to sexual or physical violence by an intimate partner within the space of One year. Increases in interpersonal violence during times of crisis are well documented, but widespread underreporting of cases across the globe has made data gathering a challenge, with less than 40% of women who experience violence seeking any help or reporting the crime. Of those women who do actually seek help, less than 10% go to the police. However, early data shows that helplines in Singapore and Cyprus have registered more than 30% increase in calls during COVID-19 lockdown. In Australia, 40% of frontline workers in New South Wales reported more requests for help with violence, while in France, domestic violence cases increased by 30% since the beginning of lockdown in March 17, 2020. In Argentina, emergency calls for domestic violence have increased by 25% since the beginning of lockdown in March 20, 2020. (DGC, 2020).

“Unfortunately, every country in the region is already all too familiar with the scourge of interpersonal violence”. (WHO, 2020).

In the United Kingdom, calls, emails and website visits to Respect, the national domestic violence charity, have increased by 97%, 185% and 581% respectively. In the first three weeks of COVID-19 lockdown, 14 women and 2 children were murdered in the country. Confinement imposed by the lockdown order is “a perfect storm” for violent behavior behind closed doors, as it aggravates tensions about security, health, and money. (Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2020).

The impacts of the COVID-19 on women include increasing rates of intimate partner violence, while lockdowns and social distancing may be particularly hard on the survivors who may already be economically dependent on their abusers. Governments across the globe must act urgently to prevent and tackle the rising rates of violence against women during the COVID-19 crisis by putting together stronger measures in place such as provisions of shelters and hotlines as emergency services, and providing support for police and the justice sector during lockdowns, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (DGC, 2020).

Based on observations, the Authors found that there is a high prevalence of domestic violence among intimate partners around the globe both in developed and developing countries. Lockdown in many countries due to COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant increase in the number of reported cases of domestic violence all over the world.

In Nigeria, cases surged from 60 reported cases in March 2020 to 238 in April 2020 in parts of the country that was under total lockdown. This is a significant increase of 297% compared to the period before lockdown. Ineffective coordination amongst major stakeholders and poor implementation of frameworks combined with infringed gender discriminatory norms has impeded government and civil society efforts to address and curb gender-based violence. This effort has unfortunately, further been compromised by the COVID-19 pandemic (IGC, 2020). Hence, it is imperative to carry out a study to fully assess the relationship between domestic violence among partners and COVID-19 lockdown. The researcher hypothesise as follows;

H1: COVID-19 lockdown will not significantly lead to physical violence among partners in Nigeria

H2: COVID-19 lockdown will not significantly lead to emotional violence among partners in Nigeria

H3: COVID-19 lockdown will not significantly lead to sexual violence among partners in Nigeria

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for the survey research design of online type. The population comprises of couples in Nigeria. One hundred and twenty-six (126) respondents were sampled for the study.

The instrument used for the study was a researchers developed questionnaire titled COVID-19 Lockdown and Domestic Violence/Abuse Questionnaire which was validated by three experts in related field and tested for reliability.

Test re-test method was used to obtain the reliability of the instrument. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to obtain a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.79. The instrument was administered through an online survey. Inferential Statistics of t-test was used to test the three research hypotheses set for the study at 0.05 alpha level, using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22.0.

RESULTS

Table 1: One sample t-test analysis of the significance of COVID-19 lockdown leading to physical violence among partners in Nigeria.

Variable	N	Mean	Df	T	Std. Deviation	P-Value	Decision
COVID-19 lockdown leading to physical violence	126	7.04	125	30.85	2.56	0.00	H_0 Rejected

$$t = 30.85, p < 0.05 \text{ at } df = 125$$

Table 1 above shows a t-value of 30.85, a mean square of 7.04 at a degree of freedom of 125. P-calculated value was found to be 0.00, which is lesser than 0.05 level of significance. This shows that the hypothesis which states that the COVID-19 lockdown will not significantly lead to physical violence among partners in Nigeria, was rejected. This implies that COVID-19 lockdown significantly leads to physical violence among partners in Nigeria

Table 2: One sample t-test analysis of the significance of COVID-19 lockdown leading to emotional violence among partners in Nigeria.

Variable	N	Mean	Df	T	Std. Deviation	P-Value	Decision
COVID-19 lockdown leading to emotional violence	126	6.50	125	42.03	1.73	0.00	H ₀ Rejected

$$t = 42.03, p < 0.05 \text{ at } df = 125$$

Table 2 above shows a t-value of 42.03, a mean square of 6.50 at a degree of freedom of 125. P-calculated value was found to be 0.00, which is lesser than 0.05 level of significance. This shows that the hypothesis which states that the COVID-19 lockdown will not significantly lead to emotional violence among partners in Nigeria, was rejected. This implies that COVID-19 lockdown significantly lead to emotional violence among partners in Nigeria.

Table 3: One sample t-test analysis of the significance of COVID-19 lockdown leading to sexual violence among partners in Nigeria.

Variable	N	Mean	Df	T	Std. Deviation	P-Value	Decision
COVID-19 lockdown leading to sexual violence	126	13.44	125	24.23	6.22	0.00	H ₀ Rejected

$$t = 24.23, p < 0.05 \text{ at } df = 125$$

Table 2 above shows a t-value of 24.23, a mean square of 13.44 at a degree of freedom of 125. P-calculated value was found to be 0.00, which is lesser than 0.05 level of significance. This shows that the hypothesis which states that the COVID-19 lockdown will not significantly lead to sexual violence among partners in Nigeria, was rejected. This implies that COVID-19 lockdown significantly lead to sexual violence among partners in Nigeria

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

COVID-19 lockdown will not significantly lead to physical violence among partners in Nigeria. The test of the hypothesis showed that t-value of 24.23, a mean square of 13.44 at a degree of freedom of 125, p-calculated value was found to be 0.00, which is lesser than 0.05 level of significance. This shows that COVID-19 lockdown significantly leads to physical violence among partners in Nigeria. The finding is supported the findings of The United Nations Department of Global Communications (DGC) (2020) who reported that a woman of Palestine Nationality in Al-Bureij camp, which happens to be one of the poorest and most crowded camps in the Gaza Strip,

had for a long time been verbally and physically abused by her husband. The situation took a turn for the worse under the COVID-19 pandemic. This resulted in the abuse becoming a daily occurrence.

COVID-19 lockdown will not significantly lead to emotional violence among partners in Nigeria. The test of the hypothesis showed that t-value of 30.85, a mean square of 7.04 at a degree of freedom of 125, p-calculated value was found to be 0.00, which is lesser than 0.05 level of significance. This shows that COVID-19 lockdown significantly leads to emotional violence among partners in Nigeria. The finding is in accordance with findings of International Growth Center (IGC) (2020) who found that whilst disease outbreaks threaten populations' health, the aggressive response measures of governments, such as lockdowns, often increase women and girls' vulnerability to violence. Indeed, since governments across the world began imposing lockdowns to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, countries have witnessed a rise in reports of gender-based violence. From the UK and US, to Singapore and China, Authorities have reported significant increase in cases of domestic violence especially emotional where some girls or housewives are being deprive of their right. There is rightfully major concern regarding the situation in many developing countries, where there is often an unfortunate widespread societal acceptance of gender-based violence.

COVID-19 lockdown will not significantly lead to sexual violence among partners in Nigeria. The test of the hypothesis showed that t-value of 24.23, a mean square of 13.44 at a degree of freedom of 125, p-calculated value was found to be 0.00, which is lesser than 0.05 level of significance. This shows that COVID-19 lockdown significantly leads to sexual violence among partners in Nigeria. The finding is in line with findings of Bettinger-Lopez and Bro (2020) who found that it is crucial to note that domestic violence was a global pandemic long before the COVID-19 outbreak. The authors reported that data collected by the UN, 243 million women and girls within 15-49 worldwide have been subjected to sexual or physical violence by an intimate partner in the space of One year. It is safe to say, one in three (1:3) women has experienced physical or sexual violence at some point in her life but the cases as increased due to COVID-19.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made:

- i. COVID-19 lockdown leads to physical violence among partners in Nigeria.
- ii. COVID-19 lockdown leads to emotional violence among partners in Nigeria.
- iii. COVID-19 lockdown leads to sexual violence among partners in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Couples should try to manage the situation of lockdown and settles matters among themselves in order to avoid physical violence
- There should be increase in counselling services on right of women for couples as for them to be able to manage issues among themselves
- Couples should abide by guidance of sex education expert and avoid the lockdown to push them in sexual violence

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