

# Public Sensitization as a Tool for Preventing Domestic Violence Against Women in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria

Oyeoku E. K., Meziobi D., Ezegbe N. B., Obikwelu C. L.  
University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

The main purpose of the study was to evolve modalities for preventing domestic violence against women in Nsukka education zone. Three research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The sample comprised 150 urban women and 450 rural women in Nsukka education zone. A 20-item questionnaire was developed, validated, and administered to these respondents. The result indicated that the measures for preventing violence against women in Nsukka education zone included among other things, the use of police, dialogue, the use of mass media, advocacy through traditional leaders, seminars, and workshops. The researchers recommended that seminars and workshops should be organized to educate members of the public on the dangers of violence against women, government should employ stringent measures against people who perpetrate violence against women, and girl-child education should be made compulsory to equip her socially and economically to enable her to become aware and exercise her rights as a good citizen of the society.

*Keyword:* violence against women, domestic violence, women, girl-child

## Introduction

Violence is an intensive or furious destructive action against a person. According to Merriam-Webster (2008), violence is exertion of physical force so as to injure or abuse a person. The WHO (World Health Organization) (2009) defined violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. In the same vein, Nwagbara (2010) stated that violence against women is any act that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts as coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether in public or private life. Therefore, violence against women is a term used to collectively refer to violent acts that are primarily or exclusively committed against women. Violence against women cuts across race, religion, income, class, and culture in both urban and rural areas. It is deeply embedded in all cultures so much, so that millions of women consider it as a way of life (WHO, 2009). The 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women noted that this violence could be

---

Oyeoku E. K., Ph.D., Department of Educational Foundations, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.  
Meziobi D., Ph.D., Department of Social Sciences Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.  
Ezegbe N. B., Ph.D., Department of Social Sciences Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka  
Obikwelu C. L., M.Ed., Department of Educational Foundations, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

perpetrated by assailants of either family members and even the “community” itself. Violence affects the lives of millions of women worldwide. UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund) Nigeria (1998) noted that any violence meted out to women has a direct effect on their health. For instance, roughly 60 million women who should have been alive die as a result of a spectrum of violence that includes sex selection before and after birth.

Violence against women takes many forms. Some of the horrific examples of violence against women in the world today in both urban and rural areas are: sex selective abortion, sexual assault, child marriage, incest, wife battery, forced prostitution, verbal abuse, marital rape, rape, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation, child abuse, dowry-related violence, trafficking of women and girl-child for prostitution and child labor, sexual violence during wars, femicide “honor killing”, forced sterilization, pornography, acid throwing, physical and emotional abuse, intimidation, finance abuse, domestic violence among others (WHO, 2009). The church and mosque also preach against these as noted by Elechi and Ogbondah (2005). The focus of this study is on domestic violence. Domestic violence which is also referred to as violence in intimacy or family violence, can be simply defined as the use and/or abuse of power and authority by force or show of force, with the intent of inflicting not only physical or psychological pain, but also humiliation and degradation in the family (Gender Action, 1997).

The general attitude and common belief of people in Igboland is that the family, regardless of type (nuclear or extended) is the haven of love, security, safety, and tranquillity. In Nigeria (urban and rural centres), it is the primary institution through which every individual is socialized. Everyone is first considered as a member of a family before being recognized as a member of any group or society in general. In this respect, the family can be considered to be society’s contractors, whose contract is to prepare the younger and newer members of society for future assumption of adult roles and responsibilities—boys to grow up to be men “like their fathers” and girls to be women “like their mothers” (Hansson, 1991). The author further noted that although the family is a place where there is love and care, but a lot of oppression, violence, and exploitation still occur. The victims are often women. One only needs to work with or talk to battered women, to shatter the image of the family as a “haven in a heartless world” for in reality it is “one of the least safe places” for women and children.

Some forms of domestic violence include the following: intimate murders, acid bath, incest, widow abuse, child abuse, dowry death, emotional and verbal abuses, marital rape, battering among others which some police powers are trying to stop (Amadi, 2000). Domestic violence is a widespread phenomenon. Studies from around the world show that 10% to over 69% of women reported being hit or otherwise physically harmed by an intimate male at some point in their lives (United Nations Fund for Population Activities, 2005). This paper, therefore, hopes to find out women’s perception of public sensitization as a tool for preventing domestic violence in urban and rural areas in Nsukka education zone.

Violence against women is embedded in most cultures. Data from South America and China give further evidence that wife battery is wide spread and is associated with depression and suicide (Bergman & Brismar, 1991). According to Amadi (2000), 60% of women in Bagladesh and Sri Lanka, 37% in India, 80% in Pakistan, and 50% in Afghanistan live with daily abuse by their intimate partners within their own homes. When a woman receives a serious physical harm, she is unable to cope with her daily activities, and in the case of death, she leaves the children motherless and thereby exposing them to the trauma of being looked after by step-mothers. In addition, physical and sexual abuse by a partner is closely associated with injuries. Violence

by an intimate partner is the leading cause of non-fatal injuries to women in the USA (WHO, 2009). Death from violence includes honor killings (by families for cultural reasons); suicide, female infanticide (murder of infant girls); and maternal death from unsafe abortion (WHO, 2009).

Violence against women is associated with sexually transmitted infection, such as HIV/AIDs, unintended pregnancies, gynecological problems, induced abortions and adverse pregnancy low birth weight and fatal death. Violence and abuse increase the risk of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep difficulties, eating disorders, and emotional distress. Abuse can result in many health problems, including headache, back-pain, abdominal pain, gastro-intestinal disorder, limited mobility, and poor overall health. According to Abama and Kwaja (2009), the social and economic costs of violence against women are enormous and have ripple effects throughout Nigeria. Women may suffer isolation, inability to work, loss of wages, lack of participation in regular activities, and limited ability to care for themselves and their children.

Violence against women has been shown to have serious effects on their health and social life, however, many women do not report such cases of abuse. The reasons for this vary. Finally, there is this general lack of awareness by women that domestic violence should not be accepted as a norm; rather it is a crime that should not be condoned. In order to buttress the above view, D. E. Antai and J. B. Antai (2008) asserted that in Africa, rural women have been reported to be conservative and are described as the bedrock of socio-cultural values of traditional societies.

### **The Statement of the Problem**

Violence against women has serious effects on their health and social life. However, many urban and rural women do not report such cases of abuse. The reasons for this vary. For instance, Abama and Kwaja (2009) reported in his recent findings that in most Nigerian customs, it is believed that a submissive wife should not be seen or heard reporting her husband and most acts of violence directed against her by her partner is blamed on her. Women are not aware that domestic violence should not be accepted as a norm, rather it is a crime that should not be condoned. African women in rural and urban areas have been seen as conservative and described as the bedrock of socio-cultural values of traditional societies.

In Nigeria, in both urban and rural areas, the perception of women about domestic violence has not been fully studied. There is then the need to bring to the front burner institutional mechanisms that sensitize women on the dangers of not reporting domestic violence and ways to prevent them. This is what the study set out to do.

### **The Purpose of the Study**

The general purpose of the study is to find out if women in urban and rural areas are aware of institutional mechanisms that can be used in sensitizing women about the danger of not reporting domestic violence and to evolve modalities for preventing domestic violence against women in Nsukka education zone. The study also hopes to make suggestions on what could be done to prevent women from undergoing domestic violence.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study:

(1) What are the perceptions of urban and rural women in Nsukka education zone about domestic violence?

(2) What are the institutional mechanisms that sensitize women on the dangers for not reporting domestic violence?

(3) In what ways can domestic violence be prevented?

### **Hypotheses**

The null hypotheses are as follows:

Ho 1 (Hypothesis one): There is no significant difference between the mean opinion scores of urban and rural women on the available institutional mechanisms that provide support to women who suffer violence;

Ho 2 (Hypothesis two): There is no significant difference between the mean opinion scores of urban and rural women on ways domestic violence can be prevented in Nsukka education zone.

### **Methodology**

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of all the urban and rural women in Nsukka education zone. The population of women in Nsukka education zone according to 2006 Population Census is 160,392. Purposive sampling was used to select a typical urban town and a typical rural town. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted in selecting the women that were involved in the study. The stratification of the sample was based on the variables of urban and rural women. Thus, 150 urban and 450 rural women were selected for the study.

A questionnaire titled "SPVAW" (Strategies for Preventing Violence Against Women) was designed by the researchers. It consisted of two sections A and B. Section A sought information on the respondents personal data (like age, last birthday, level of education, and location) while Section B contained 20 items in three clusters A, B, and C. A 4-rating scale of "Strongly agree" (four points), "Agree" (three points), "Disagree" (two points), and "Strongly disagree" (one point) was provided to assist the respondents in making their responses to the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was face validated by three experts in the sociology of education and two experts in measurement and evaluation in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria. The observations of the experts formed the basis for the modification of items of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to 20 women in Enugu town. The Cronbach's alpha was used to test the internal consistency of the items of the questionnaire. The alpha yielded values of 0.67–0.71 and 0.68 for the three clusters. The entire cluster put together was 0.69. The index of reliability confirmed that the instrument was reliable for the study.

The researcher and eight research assistants administered copies of the questionnaire to the respondents. Data were analyzed using means score for research questions. The *t*-test statistic was used in testing the two hypotheses for the study.

### **Results**

The results of the study were presented in tables based on research questions.

Table 1 presents the means ratings of urban and rural women on their perception of domestic violence against women in Nsukka education zone. Looking at Table 1, we can see that items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 are rated 3.55, 3.33, 2.95, 3.00, and 3.48 by urban women while rural women rated these same items 3.47, 3.20, 2.88, 3.10, and 3.39, respectively. These mean scores are above the criterion mean of 2.50. *SD* (Standard deviation)

which ranges from 0.63 to 0.91, indicates that the responses of the respondents are close to the mean.

It is, therefore, the opinion of the urban and rural women that there is maltreatment and humiliation against women, pure discrimination and stigmatization against the female folk and that violence is perpetrated against women because people feel they are the weaker sex.

Table 1

*Mean Ratings of Urban and Rural Women on Their Perception of Domestic Violence*

S/N	Perception of urban and rural women	Urban women			Rural women		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	DEC	$\bar{X}$	SD	DEC
1	Domestic violence is maltreatment against the female folk	3.55	0.63	A	3.47	0.71	A
2	Humiliation against women	3.33	0.80	A	3.20	0.86	A
3	Pure discrimination against the female folk	2.95	0.91	A	2.88	0.79	A
4	Stigmatization against women	3.00	0.57	A	3.10	0.85	A
5	Violence is perpetrated against women because people feel they are the weaker sex	3.48	0.69	A	3.39	0.81	A

Table 2

*Mean Ratings of Urban and Rural Women in Nsukka Education Zone on Available Institutional Mechanisms That Provide Support for Women Who Suffer Violence*

S/N	Responses of institutional mechanisms of domestic violence	Urban women			Rural women		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	DEC	$\bar{X}$	SD	DEC
6	Their brothers	3.11	0.69	A	3.22	0.73	A
7	Their parents	3.33	0.80	A	3.25	0.80	A
8	The church/mosque	3.66	0.56	A	3.57	0.60	A
9	Their spouse relatives	3.11	0.69	A	3.22	0.73	A
10	Their traditional rulers	3.10	0.69	A	3.06	0.83	A
11	Their councilors	3.48	0.69	A	3.39	0.81	A
12	Go to lawyer	3.30	0.77	A	3.25	0.80	A

Table 2 presents the mean ratings of the urban and rural women in Nsukka education zone on available institutional mechanisms that provide support for women who suffer violence. Looking at the Table 2, we can observe that items 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 are rated 3.11, 3.33, 3.66, 3.11, 3.10, 3.48, and 3.30 by urban women while the rural women rated the same items 3.22, 3.25, 3.57, 3.22, 3.06, 3.39, and 3.25, respectively. These mean scores are above the criterion of 2.50. *SD* which ranges from 0.56 to 0.80 indicates that the responses of the respondents are close to the mean.

It is, thus, the opinions of both the urban and rural women in Nsukka education zone that the available institutional mechanisms that provide support for women who suffer violence include: their brothers, parents, relations, the church/mosque, spouse relatives, traditional rulers, councilors, and lawyers.

Table 3 presents the mean ratings of urban and rural women in Nsukka education zone on ways domestic violence can be prevented. Looking at Table 3, we can see that items 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 are rated 2.33, 2.77, 3.66, 3.77, 3.05, 3.66, and 3.10 by urban women while rural women rated these same items 2.41, 2.66, 3.57, 3.66, 3.11, 3.57, and 3.06, respectively. These mean scores are above the criterion mean of 2.50. *SD* which ranges from 0.50 to 1.03, indicates that the responses of the respondents are close to the mean.

It is, therefore, the opinions of the urban and rural women in Nsukka education zone that the measures that should be taken to prevent domestic violence against women include: police, dialogue, use of media, seminars

and workshops, advocacy through traditional leaders and forcing women to go to school.

Table 3

*Mean Ratings of Urban and Rural Women in Nsukka Education Zone on Ways Domestic Violence Can Be Prevented*

S/N	Prevention of domestic violence	Urban women			Rural women		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	DEC	$\bar{X}$	SD	DEC
13	Use of women's brothers	2.41	0.97	D	2.37	1.03	D
14	Use of thugs	2.33	1.01	D	2.41	0.79	D
15	Use of police	2.77	0.87	A	2.66	0.78	A
16	Dialogue	3.66	0.69	A	3.57	0.72	A
17	Use of the media (newspapers, radio, and TV jingles)	3.77	0.50	A	3.66	0.61	A
18	Seminars and workshops	3.05	0.76	A	3.11	0.85	A
19	Advocacy through traditional leaders	3.66	0.55	A	3.57	0.60	A
20	Forcing women to go to school	3.10	0.69	A	3.06	0.83	A
		24.68			25.41		

### Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference ( $P < 0.05$ ) between the mean opinion scores of urban and rural women on the available institutional mechanisms that provide support to women who suffer violence.

To test the above null hypothesis, a *t*-test analysis of the difference between the mean opinion scores of urban and rural women was computed and the result is shown on Table 4.

Table 4

*Summary of t-Test Table for the Analysis of the Difference Between Mean Opinion Scores of Urban and Rural Women*

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	Prob. level	t-Cal	Table of crit.	Decision
Urban women	150	3.53	0.61	598	0.05	-1.75	1.96	Ho <sub>1</sub> is accepted
Rural women	450	3.63	0.57					

Looking at Table 4, we can see that the calculated *t*-value is -1.75 at 598 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since this calculated value of -1.75 is less than the table value of 1.96, the first null hypothesis of the study is accepted. That is, there is no significant difference between the opinions of urban and rural women on the available institutional mechanisms that provide support to women who suffer violence.

### Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference ( $P < 0.05$ ) between the mean opinion scores of urban and rural women on ways domestic violence can be prevented in Nsukka education zone.

To test the above null hypothesis, a test analysis of the difference between the mean opinion scores of urban and rural women was computed and the result is shown in Table 5.

Looking at Table 5, we can see that the calculated *t*-value is 1.11 at 598 degrees of freedom  $< 0.05$  level of significance. Since this calculated value of 1.11 is less than the critical (see Table 5) value of 1.96, the second null hypothesis of the study is accepted. That is, there is, therefore, no significant difference between the mean opinion scores of urban and rural women on the strategies for preventing violence among women in Nsukka education zone.

Table 5

*Summary of t-Test Table for the Analysis of the Difference Between Mean Opinion Scores of Urban and Rural Women*

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	Prob. level	Cal t value	Table of crit.	Decision
Urban women	150	3.31	0.59	598	0.05	1.11	1.96	Ho <sub>2</sub> is accepted
Rural women	450	3.29	0.63					

### Discussion

Urban and rural women in Nsukka education zone agreed that there is maltreatment, discrimination, and humiliation against them and that violence is perpetrated against them, because people feel they are the weaker sex. This finding is in line with the statement of Goldthorpe (1985) who pointed out that there is maltreatment, discrimination, and humiliation against women in African societies. Since the majority of women agreed that maltreatment, discrimination, and humiliation exist, then, policy makers should focus more sensitization programmes on the men who perpetrate these acts.

Both groups of respondents also agreed that the available institutional mechanisms that provide support for women who suffer violence include brothers, parents, spouse relations, the church, traditional rulers, councilors, and lawyers. This finding is understandable given the fact that brothers, sister, parents, and spouse relations are the immediate members of every family who provides support and protection to women. The church/mosque inculcates good morals in the adherences and discipline erring members. According to Elechi and Ogbondah (2006, p. 107), the church/mosque preach against evil vices, such as stealing, dishonesty, disobedience, robbery, drug, abuse, and violence against human beings. Although the women agreed that these supports are available, there may be need for further studies to find out to what extent women make use of these available supports.

Urban and rural women in Nsukka education zone reported that the available institutional mechanisms that provide support for women who suffer violence in Nsukka zone include traditional rulers, councilors, lawyers, and the use of police. Amadi (2000) stated that part of police powers in Nigeria is the support they give to women who are maltreated and humiliated by their spouses, relations, and the public. However, one wonders how effective these mechanisms are because stories abound of women who were denied hearing by traditional rulers, councilors, and police because of the belief that domestic violence is a "family matter".

It was the opinions of urban and rural women in Nsukka education zone that the measures that should be taken to prevent domestic violence against women include the use of police, dialogue, the use of the media, schooling, and advocacy through traditional rulers, seminars, and workshops. This finding is in line with the recommendations of Amadi (2000) in his work on police powers in Nigeria. Amadi stated that the use of the Nigerian police, advocacy through traditional rulers and the mass media are measures that could be taken to prevent domestic violence against women. In most societies, traditional rulers command a lot of respect and are bound to be heard if they speak up against some of the ill-treatment being meted out on women.

### Educational Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study have a lot of implications for educationalists. This is because findings have shown that the respondents are of the view public sensitization is very important in preventing domestic violence. Therefore, it may be in the interest of women if the Ministry of Education includes the bad effects of domestic violence in our school curriculum, so that awareness will be created among the general populace.

Also, the Ministry of Information can through public sensitization create awareness among the general populace on the dangers of domestic violence not just on the women but on the family as a whole.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

Since violence against women is a social problem that cuts across race, religion, education, class, and culture any approach designed to combat violence must be twofold, addressing the root causes of the problem and treating its manifestation. Society at large, including judges, police officers must be educated to change the attitudes and beliefs that encourage violence against women:

- (1) Seminars and workshops should be organized to educate members of the public on the dangers of violence against women;
- (2) Government should employ stringent measures against people who perpetrate violence against women;
- (3) Girl-child education should be made compulsory to equip her socially and economically to enable her to become aware and exercise her rights as a good citizen of the society.

### References

- Abama, E., & Kwaja, M. A. (2009). Violence against women in Nigeria. How the millennium development goals addresses the challenge. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 3(3), 23-24.
- Amadi, G. O. S. (2000). *Police in Nigeria*. Nsukka: Afro-Orbis Publications.
- Antai, D. E., & Antai, J. B. (2008). Attitude of women towards intimate partner. *Rural and Remote Health*, 8, 996. Retrieved March 14, 2010, from <http://www.rrh.org.au>
- Bergman, B., & Brismar, B. (1991). Suicide attempt to battered wife. *Acts psychiatric Sandinavia*, 8, 380-384
- Elechi, G. E., & Ogbondah, F. (2005). *Sociological foundations of education*. Port Harcourt: Harey Publications.
- Gender Action. (1997). Violence against women: Boundary. *Issue of Human Right*, 4, 111-120.
- Goldhorpe, J. E. (1985). *An introduction to sociology*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Hansson, D. (1991). Working against violence against women: Recommendations from rape crisis Cape Town. In S. Bazilli (Ed.), *Put women on the agenda* (p. 182). Johannessburg: Raven Press.
- Heasman, K. (1976). *The study of society*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Merriam-Webster. (2008). *Webster's all-in-one dictionary and thesaurus*. Springfield, M. A.: Federal Street Press.
- UNICEF Nigeria. (1988). *Gender and development awareness and sensitization in Nigeria*. Enugu: Afro-Orbis Publications Limited.
- United Nations Fund for Population Activities. (2005). *Violence against women fact sheet*. State of World Population.
- United Nations General Assembly. (1993). Declaration on the elimination of violence against women. *85th Plenary meeting*, Vienna, Austria.
- WHO (World Health Organization). (2009). *World report on violence and health*. Geneva: World Health Organization.