

# Survey of unreported cases of domestic violence in two heterogeneous communities in Nigeria

Olakunle Michael Folami<sup>1,2,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, Ondo, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>University of Ulster, Londonderry, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom

\*Email: xtianfayol@yahoo.com

## ABSTRACT

Women in Nigeria are reluctant to report cases of domestic violence to the police. This study examines the magnitude of domestic violence in Nigeria. It also examines respondents' levels of education, culture, religion, and tradition vis-à-vis unreported cases of domestic violence in two heterogeneous communities in Nigeria. This study surmises that the level of domestic violence could be reduced if women were given social support to report incidences of domestic violence to the police. Quantitative method of data collection was employed in this study. The respondents were drawn from women in Victoria Island, Lagos and Akure, Ondo State. Four hundred and sixty-two surveys were analyzed, 284 from Victoria Island, and 178 from Akure. The results show that culture, attitudes of police, and absence of social support contribute to the unwillingness of women to report cases of domestic violence. This paper concludes that police officers need to be educated on how to properly handle domestic violence cases.

*Keywords:* Domestic violence, women, police, reporting, liberal feminism

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## INTRODUCTION

While some academics, nongovernmental organizations and professional groups at the national level have conducted studies on domestic violence, the subject has not received the attention it deserves in Nigeria. The available academic literature on domestic violence is not only scant, but also dominated by foreign authors who use 'imported' parameters of analysis. The small amount of research currently available focuses only on the demographic nature of domestic violence. Most of the existing research merely deals with the prevalence, pattern, and correlation of domestic violence.<sup>1</sup>

Domestic violence is not a new social phenomenon, but its magnitude is becoming increasingly alarming. On a daily basis women are beaten, "punished", forcibly raped, and, even, murdered by intimate partners or members of their families.<sup>2</sup>

In most African countries, such as Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Ghana, at least three-quarters of women with intimate partners have suffered physical or sexual abuse in their home.<sup>3</sup> For example, in Ghana, many women have visited the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit to complain because their partners have beaten them.<sup>4</sup> Domestic violence is one of the major marital crises experienced by women in Nigeria, but most of the cases are not reported to the police.<sup>5</sup> The consequences of domestic violence are so severe that many homes have either been separated or destroyed.<sup>6</sup>

The 1993, the United Nations Declaration on domestic violence defines it as any act of gender-based violence that results in, physical (including threats of such acts) coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.<sup>7</sup> Gender-based violence is considered violence directed against a woman because she is a woman or that disproportionately affects women.<sup>8</sup> Many cultures condone or illegally sanction domestic violence.<sup>9</sup> In Nigeria, violence towards women is a common aspect of marriage that receives little attention from law enforcement agents.

The country is divided between a majority Muslim north and a largely Christian south.<sup>10</sup> There are three legal principles that operate in the north and south of the country. The south operates on the basis of a criminal code, while the north applies the penal code and Shari'a law.<sup>11</sup> In Northern Nigeria, for example, Section 55 of the Penal Code is based on punitive philosophy rather than a criminal legal procedure that allows a husband to discipline his wife.<sup>12</sup> Once a woman is married, she is culturally expected to endure whatever condition comes her way in her matrimonial home.<sup>13</sup>

In Africa, awareness, perception, definition and documentation of domestic violence differ from region to region and from culture to culture.<sup>14</sup> In Nigeria, a third (and in some cases two-thirds) of

<sup>1</sup>Ndugasa Christian Okemgbo, Adekunbi Kehinde Omideyi, Clifford Odimegwu, *Prevalence, Pattern and Correlate of Domestic Violence in Selected Igbo Communities*, 2 African J. of Soc. Sci. 65, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12476722>, (accessed March 14, 2008); Funso Afolayan, *Gender Roles, Marriage, and Family, in Culture and Customs of South Africa* 181-212 (Funso S. Afolayan ed., Greenwood Press 2004); Stephane Mikala, *Domestic Violence in Nigeria*, <http://www.amnesty.org>, (accessed January 2, 2014).

<sup>2</sup>Leonie Taylor, *Domestic Violence: The Problem Pervading Nigeria*, 11 (Think Africa Press, March 14, 2012), <http://thinkafricapress.com/nigeria/domestic-violence-problem-pervading>, (accessed March 9, 2013).

<sup>3</sup>Department for Foreign and International Development, *Time to stop domestic violence: Department of International Development Bulletin*, 15-24, October, 2009, <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/other/9780102968323/9780102968323.pdf>, (accessed Oct. 6, 2007).

<sup>4</sup>Ghana web, 109,784 cases of domestic violence recorded, <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=183316> (accessed June 2, 2010).

<sup>5</sup>Amobi Ilika, Prosper Okonkwo, Martine Adogu, *Intimate partner violence among women of childbearing age in a primary health care centre in Nigeria*, 6 Afr J. Reprod. Health 53, 58 (2002).

<sup>6</sup>Johnson Kumolu, *Domestic violence becoming a norm in Nigeria*, <http://reporters365.com/around-nigeria/domestic-violence-becoming-a-norm-in-nigeria-lawyer/> (accessed Oct. 8, 2013).

<sup>7</sup>The United Nations Department of Public Information DPI/1772/HR 1996, *Human Rights*, <http://www.un.org/rights/dpi1772e.htm> (accessed Sept. 17, 2013).

<sup>8</sup>World Health Organization, *Violence against women: Intimate partner and sexual violence against women: Fact sheet N°239*, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/> (Nov. 17, 2013).

<sup>9</sup>CLEEN Foundation, *Summary of Findings of 2012 National Crime and Safety Survey*, <http://cleenfoundation.blogspot.co.uk/2012/07/summary-of-findings-of-2012-national.html> (accessed July 24, 2013).

<sup>10</sup>Toyin Falola, *The History of Nigeria*, 1 (Greenwood Press, 1999).

<sup>11</sup>Ukoha Ukiwo, *Politics, ethno-religious conflict and democratic consolidation in Nigeria*, 41 J. of Modern Stud., 1, 120 (2003).

<sup>12</sup>Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *Religion and Conflict* (1993) <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a80510.html>, (accessed May 3, 2013).

<sup>13</sup>Itoro Eze-Anaba, *Domestic Violence and Legal Reforms in Nigeria: Prospects and Challenges*, (Berkeley Electronics Press Legal Series Publication), <http://law.bepress.com/expresso/eps/1507/>, (accessed Nov. 25, 2012).

<sup>14</sup>Samuel Obi, Benjamin Ozumba, *Factors associated with domestic violence in South-East Nigeria*, 27 J. of Obstetrics & Gynecology 1, 75-78 (2007).

women are believed to have been subjected to physical, sexual and psychological violence, less than one percent of these cases are reported to the police.<sup>15</sup> This absence of reporting and lack of official figures make the assessment of the extent of domestic violence an almost impossible task.<sup>16</sup>

However, this researcher believes the levels of violence are shockingly high; in fact, it is assumed that most women in Nigeria have experienced physical, sexual, or psychological violence.<sup>17</sup>

Official crime statistics, a socially processed artifact, could not account for the underreported cases of domestic violence. Federal Police statistics stated that 1,952 cases of domestic violence were recorded in 2009. This is a low figure compared with 5,567 cases reported from a victim survey carried out by Faribs Consult on an UNHabitat's project on "Good Urban Governance" in Akure South and Akure North Local Government, Nigeria in 2010.<sup>18</sup>

The prevalence of domestic violence and lack of reported cases do not provide accurate demographic facts for the authorities and policy makers to create appropriate laws that could curtail the menace of domestic violence in Nigeria. According to the results of this survey, it seems unreported cases of domestic violence could not be disassociated from women's perception of the police, and the plethora of problems confronting the police, such as lack of motivation, manpower and public confidence, inefficiency, corruption, inadequate training, bribery and leadership problems.<sup>19</sup>

Adding to the police problem, the consequences of reporting domestic violence are severe. A woman becomes a pariah to her husband, relatives, and the larger community if she reports a case of domestic violence to the police; such a woman becomes labeled and stigmatized. The economic base of many women who report domestic violence is often jeopardized because their sources of income, most especially in the rural areas of Nigeria, are largely connected to their husbands.<sup>20</sup> The unreported cases of domestic violence to the police may be a major factor why the problem persists in Nigeria.

The purpose of this study therefore was to: 1) determine the prevalence of domestic violence in two heterogeneous communities in Nigeria; 2) investigate the reasons women do not report cases of domestic violence to the police; 3) examine the socio-economic consequences of reporting cases of domestic violence; 4) to explore the protections available for women who report cases of domestic violence to the police; and, finally, 5) to suggest steps that need to be taken by the police and the Nigerian Government to protect women who report cases of domestic violence to the police.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is grounded in the liberal feminist analysis of inequality, exploitation and discrimination against women. The theory has been at the centre of women's struggles since the eighteenth century. Liberal feminism provides a deeper understanding of gender-related issues such as exclusion, inequality, repression, oppression, prejudice and imbalance in a patriarchy society such as Southwest, Nigeria.

The liberal feminist theory has its root in the social inequality theory of Karl Marx and provides the basis for the global movements for women's emancipation and respect of their natural and civil rights.<sup>21</sup> Liberal feminist theory provides logical explanations and makes sense of observed patterns that suggest other possibilities in the study, shape and direct research efforts, which point toward likely discoveries through empirical investigation.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Clifford Odimegwu, Paper presentation, *Formation and Domestic Violence among the Tiv of Benue State, Nigeria* (International Colloquium Gender, Population and Development in Africa organized by UAPS, INED, ENSEA, IFORD: Abidjan, Benin Republic July 6-21 2001).

<sup>16</sup>Amnesty International, *Project Alert on Violence against Women, No Safe Haven: Annual Report of Attacks on Women in Nigeria December 2002 – November 2003* p. vii (2007).

<sup>17</sup>*Id.*

<sup>18</sup>UN Habitat, *Report on training of trainers (TOT) workshop on the good urban governance assessment of Nigeria*, Workshop held in Lagos 3-4 August 2010 [http://afrigap.gaportal.org/sites/default/files/TOT\\_report\\_nigeria.pdf](http://afrigap.gaportal.org/sites/default/files/TOT_report_nigeria.pdf), (accessed, 17 July, 2013); Federal Police Statistics <http://www.npf.gov.ng/departments/e-department/>, (accessed, 17 July, 2013).

<sup>19</sup>Chris Ifemeje, *Gender-Based Domestic Violence in Nigeria: A Socio-Legal Perspective*, 19 Indian J. of Gender Stud. 1, 137-148 (2012).

<sup>20</sup>Humaira Zulfiqar, Rackham Hassan, *Level of Awareness Regarding Domestic Violence: comparison between Working and Non-working Women: a Case Study of Lalazar, Rawalpindi, Pakistan*, 19 J. of Peace, Conflict & Dev. (2012).

<sup>21</sup>Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Routledge 1990, 2000).

<sup>22</sup>Mendez Gimenez, *Marxist Feminism/Materialism Feminism*, <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/feminism/mar.html> (accessed April 30, 2013).

Liberal feminism, also known as “egalitarian or mainstream feminism,”<sup>23</sup> is considered the most moderate branch of feminist theory.<sup>24</sup> It is based on the simple proposition that all people are created equal and should not be socially, politically and economically denied rights because of gender. Men and women would benefit by the elimination of sexism. Liberal feminism is based on enlightenment beliefs of rationality, education, and the natural rights that extend to all men and women.<sup>25</sup> The theory provides a quintessential approach to the understanding of relationships between men and women both in the public and private spheres of society. It is assumed that gender inequality, gender repression, gender oppression, gender discrimination and gender prejudice are products of individual ignorance.<sup>26</sup>

The theory postulates that education of members of society about the necessity for gender equality is a valuable tool in the battle against discrimination. Legislation against any form of sexual discrimination is seen as the start of a solution that eventually changes individual attitudes and behavior. For example, the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts in Britain in the 1970s reduced the gender imbalance among workers in the United Kingdom.<sup>27</sup>

Liberal feminists believe society does not have to be completely restructured to achieve empowerment but that women need to be incorporated into meaningful and equitable roles. Some women’s groups believe that women areas equally endowed as men; that social, political and economic discrimination could be attributed to role gendering.<sup>28</sup>

The gendering of conflict roles tend to be adopted by professional and women’s groups who place a high value on education and achievement. These groups assume women are likely to have the economic resources to better compete with men for desirable goals, if educated.<sup>29</sup> Gender inequality theorists agree that women’s conditions and experience of social situations are not only different but also unequal to men’s.<sup>30</sup> Liberal feminists argue that women are endowed with the same capacity as men for moral reasoning and activities, but that patriarchy, particularly the sexist patterning of the division of labor, has historically denied women the opportunity to express and practice this reasoning.<sup>31</sup> Women have been conditioned to the private sphere of the household and, thus, left without a voice in the public sphere.<sup>32</sup>

Even after women enter the public sphere, they are still expected to manage the private sphere, such as taking care of household duties and childcare. Liberal feminists point out that marriage is a site of gender inequality and that women do not benefit as much as men from being married.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, married women have higher levels of stress than unmarried women and married men.<sup>34</sup>

According to liberal feminists, the sexual division of labor in both public and private spheres needs to be altered in order for women to achieve equality.<sup>35</sup> Women are seen as a form of “private property” owned by men (through the institution of marriage). Women become ‘free’ from their shackles when ‘patriarchy’ has been dismantled. Invariably, ‘patriarchy’ is not the only factor shaping social divisions

<sup>23</sup>Lourdes Beneria, *Gender, Development, and Globalization: Economics As If All People Mattered*, (Routledge 2003).

<sup>24</sup>Sonia Alvarez, Latin American Feminisms ‘Go Global’: Trends of the 1990s and Challenges for the New Millennium, in *Cultures of Politics/Politics of Cultures: Revisioning Latin American Social Movements*, 93-115 (Sonia Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino & Arturo Escobar eds, Westview 1998).

<sup>25</sup>Julie Bettie, *Women without Class: Chicas, Cholas, Trash and the Presence/Absence of Class Identity*, 26 *Signs*, J. of Women in Culture and Socy., Vol 26,1 (2000).

<sup>26</sup>Zillah Eisenstein, *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism*, (Longman 1981).

<sup>27</sup>Jerry Jacob, *Revolving Doors: Sex Segregation and Women’s Careers* (Stanford University Press 1989).

<sup>28</sup>Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* (Zed 1986).

<sup>29</sup>Phyllis Moen, *It’s About Time: Couples and Careers* (ILR Press 2003).

<sup>30</sup>Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Duke University Press 2003).

<sup>31</sup>Diane Reay, *Rethinking Social Class: Qualitative Perspectives on Class and Gender*, in *Feminist Perspectives on Social Research* 149-154 (SharleneNagy Hesse-Biber and Michelle L. Yaiser, eds. Oxford University Press 2004).

<sup>32</sup>Karishma Anand, *Liberal feminism, Rise-of-womanhood*, <http://www.rise-of-womanhood.org/liberal-feminism.html> (Nov. 6, 2013).

<sup>33</sup>Flinn Mallory, *Feminist Theory Series: Liberal Feminism*, <http://ok4rj.org/2012/02/feminist-theory-series-liberalfeminism/> (Feb. 6 2013); Sandra Odisho, *Liberal Feminism and Justice & Equality*, <http://prezi.com/awb3ku3mq54d/liberal-feminism-and-justice-equality/> (Nov. 28 2013); Zillah Eisenstein, *Friedan’s Liberal Feminist Mystique and the Changing Politics of Now* in *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism* (Eisenstein ed. Palgrave 1981); (See Wollstonecraft, The writing of Wollstonecraft is included in the more general anthologies *Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings* (1972) edited by Miriam Schneir and *The Feminist Papers: From Adams to de Beauvoir* (Alice S. Rossi ed. 1973).

<sup>34</sup>Nancy Folbre, *Who Pays for the Kids? Gender and the Structures of Constraint* (Routledge 1994); Pahl, J., *A Rectangle for Battered Women* (HMSO 1994).

<sup>35</sup>Nancy Rosenblum, *Okin’s Liberal Feminism as a Radical Political Theory* (Oxford University Press 2010).

which affect the behavior of men and women. Other factors such as ethnicity and socio-economic backgrounds tend to play a significant role.<sup>36</sup>

Laws against sex trafficking and abuse have been promulgated in Nigeria; but there is no existing law that specifically prohibits a husband from physically abusing his wife. Violence against women in the home is most often treated by the police as a private issue or, at best, as misconduct.<sup>37</sup> In spite of the growth in the number of victims of gender-based crime, the reporting rate to the police has been very low in comparison to the reporting of other crimes, such as burglary and robbery. In a victimization survey carried out in Lagos State in 2004 by the CLEEN Foundation in collaboration with the Federal Office of Statistics, only five percent of victims of gender-based crimes reported their victimization to the police.<sup>38</sup> The figures are certainly lower when comparing reporting rates in other cities and states in Nigeria that have neither the cosmopolitan nature of Lagos State nor the level of literacy.

The primary question that this study addresses is whether there is a need to provide social services to protect women who report cases of domestic violence. Additional questions revolve around an examination of other factors that deter women from reporting instances of gender-based violence to the police such as culture, tradition, patriarchy, economy and religion.

## METHOD OF THE STUDY CONDUCTED

### Description of the study area

This study was conducted in Nigeria, located in West Africa, with a population of about 170 million.<sup>39</sup> Nigeria is bordered by Benin Republic to the west, Cameroun to the east, Niger to the north and the Atlantic Ocean to the south.<sup>40</sup> Nigeria is divided into thirty-six States and a Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. There are over two hundred and fifty ethnic tribes in Nigeria.<sup>41</sup> The three major tribes are: Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa. The country is divided between a majority Muslim north and a largely Christian south.<sup>42</sup> About ten per cent of the population are worshippers of traditional deities.<sup>43</sup>

Three competing legal systems are in operation in the north and south of the county, Shari'a law and penal codes in the north and criminal codes in the south. The customary and Shari'a courts handle family and marriage cases in the north. Shari'a law in the north is not mandatory for inhabitants; but a matter of choice. Marriage and family issues are handled by the customary courts in the south.

The study was carried out in Southwest, Nigeria. There are six States in the region namely: Ekiti, Lagos, Ondo, Ogun, Oyo and Osun.<sup>44</sup> Out of the six States in the region, the following two States were selected: Lagos and Ondo. The criteria for selecting the States include the following: the area selected must have low level of reported domestic violence cases; they must have customary courts as well as free legal aid facilities and law clinics.<sup>45</sup>

Free legal aid and law clinics are included because they provide legal aid to less privileged citizens. Free legal aid is provided by the Police Duty Solicitor, which comprises the Legal Aid Officer and National Youth Service Scheme.<sup>46</sup> Law clinics are another aspect of *pro bono* legal services provided by the University law students.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>36</sup>Emma Uzoromoh, *Domestic Violence in Nigeria: Nkechi and the unborn Child*, <http://ngmix.net/lib/vendor/web/articles/7/5661.html> (April 2 2013).

<sup>37</sup>Afrol News, AFROL Gender Profiles: Nigeria. In Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Nigeria: Domestic violence; recourse and protection available to victims of domestic violence (2005-2007), 10 August, 2007, NGA 102510, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/46fa536f17.html>; Sandra Umeh and Deborah Akpede, *Wife-battering and the Nigerian woman*, Premium Times P8 (Dec. 27, 2012).

<sup>38</sup>Elannibi Alemika, Innocent Chukwuma, *The Poor and Informal Policing in Nigeria* (CLEEN Foundation 2004).

<sup>39</sup>Country Meters, *Nigeria Population Clock*, <http://countrymeters.info/en/Nigeria/> (accessed Sept. 18, 2013).

<sup>40</sup>Federal Republic of Nigeria, *About Nigeria*, <http://www.nigeria.gov.ng/2012-10-29-11-05-46> (accessed Sept. 18, 2013).

<sup>41</sup>Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html> (Aug. 22, 2013).

<sup>42</sup>Tim Cocks, *Insight: Islamist Attacks Strain Nigeria's North-South Divide*, 1 (Reuters 2011).

<sup>43</sup>Flora Ogbuitepu, *Drawing the Lines: The Right to Religion and Religious Crisis in Nigeria*, Consultancy Africa Intelligence 4 (July 1, 2011).

<sup>44</sup>Nigerian Office of Statistics, *2006 Population Census*, [www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/Connections/Pop2006.pdf](http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/Connections/Pop2006.pdf), deadlink, (2007).

<sup>45</sup>*d. Nigeria*

<sup>46</sup>Kewwe Omoragbon, *The Growth of Law Clinics as a Vehicle for Legal Empowerment in Nigeria*, paper presented at the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Africa Conference, 2012, at the University of Texas at Austin, USA. Dates: March 30-April 1 2012. Available: <http://northumbrialawblog.wordpress.com/2012/03/01/the-growth-of-law-clinics-as-a-vehicle-for-legal-empowerment-in-nigeria/> (2012).

<sup>47</sup>Vicent Mpamugo & Uche Jack-Osimiri, *Clinical aspects of legal education at Abia State University Nigeria*, 14 J. of Prof. Leg. Educ. 1,125-133.

Akure, the capital of Ondo State, and Victoria Island in Lagos State were the selected locations for the study.

### Akure South

Akure has two local government areas, namely: Akure North and Akure South. Akure has a population of approximately 588,000.<sup>48</sup> Residential quarters in Akure South were selected for the sample area. Akure South's residents generally practice traditional values, even though there are a high number of educated elites.<sup>49</sup>

The residents are dominated predominantly by the Yoruba tribe.

Ondo State contains the largest number of public schools in Nigeria with over 880 primary schools, 190 secondary schools, one Federal University of Technology, and one College of Agriculture. Akure South houses the State Police Commands, Civil Defense Corps Headquarters and has many human rights campaign organizations and free legal aid councils.<sup>50</sup> The local government has 13 police stations/posts. Government offices employ some people in the area; others are peasant farmers, traders, artisans and merchants. Akure South has a paramount ruler, the Deji of Akure. There are several districts under the control of the Deji of Akure such as Isolo, Oluwatuoyi, Oke Aro, Awule, Idi Agba and Okuta Elerinla.<sup>51</sup>

These districts are headed by High Chiefs appointed by the Deji of Akure in consultation with the members of the respective community. The chiefs apply traditional legal methods to settle disputes among citizens. There are various courts with different degrees and powers in Akure South, such as the Customary Court, Magistrate Court, State High Court, Federal High Court and Appeals Court.<sup>52</sup>

There is also a weekly family program on the Ondo State Radiovision Corporation called "Ijoko Ojogbon" (Committee of the enlightened) where various cases affecting the family, including domestic violence are addressed.<sup>53</sup>

The program has no enforcement power but uses persuasion and moralization to settle various family crises.<sup>54</sup>

### Victoria Island

Victoria Island is located in Eti-Osa Local Government of Lagos State. Victoria Island consists of sophisticated and educated people of different socio-cultural backgrounds. Until 1992, prior to the creation of the new Federal Capital Territory in Abuja, the Eti-Osa local government area was the formal seat of the national administration.<sup>54</sup> It has a total population of nearly around 284,000.<sup>55</sup> People of Eti-Osa are predominantly Awori, a Yoruba subgroup; some citizens are Igbo and Hausa/Fulani from the north of the country. Victoria Island is an exclusive area where many of the educated elites in Lagos State reside. It also houses bank headquarters and head offices of some major companies in Nigeria.<sup>56</sup> There is a police zonal command in the area. The area has over 15 police stations and posts.<sup>57</sup> Victoria Island is highly populated. There are several schools in the area: 6 public primary schools, 22 private

<sup>48</sup>Millennium Cities Initiative (2008) Akure Research. Earth Institute Columbia University, USA [http://mci.ei.columbia.edu/millennium-cities/akure-nigeria/akure-research/link\\_cat/Akure,%20Nigeria/](http://mci.ei.columbia.edu/millennium-cities/akure-nigeria/akure-research/link_cat/Akure,%20Nigeria/) (accessed Aug. 2, 2013).

<sup>49</sup>National Population Commission of Nigeria, Akure South (Local Government Area). City Population, Denmark, <http://www.citypopulation.de/php/nigeria-admin.php?adm2id=2806> (accessed Jan. 14, 2012).

<sup>50</sup>Legal Aid Council Nigeria, *The Police Duty Solicitors Scheme*, (2004) [http://www.legalaidcouncil.gov.ng/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=71&Itemid=89#](http://www.legalaidcouncil.gov.ng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=71&Itemid=89#)

<sup>51</sup>Adedayo Emmanuel Afe, *A Historical Survey of Socio-political Administration in Akure Region up to the Contemporary Period*, 8 *Europ. Sci. J.* Vol 20 (2013).

<sup>52</sup>Isola Olomola, *Antidote against Royal Absolutism among the Yoruba: A Preliminary Survey in Ife*, Ife J. of Inst. of Cultural Stud. Vol 8 (2002).

<sup>53</sup>Mike Donald, *Father Sues His Son to Court Or Vice Versa, Which is Better For Nigeria Culture?- Culture-Naira land*, <http://www.nairaland.com/1239353/father-sues-son-court-vice>, (accessed 2 August, 2013).

<sup>54</sup>Commonwealth Law Conference, *Abuja Information. The Commonwealth Regional Law Conference, Abuja, Nigeria*, [http://www.commonwealthlaw2010.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=91&Itemid=93](http://www.commonwealthlaw2010.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=91&Itemid=93), (accessed April 8, 2011).

<sup>55</sup>Wumi Akintude, *Why Nigeria would for a long time remain a caricature of the American Presidential System*, <http://nigeriaworld.com/feature/publication/akintide/041612.html>, (accessed April 16, 2013).

<sup>56</sup>Central Bank of Nigeria, *Index of Banks Licensed to Operate in Nigeria. Central Bank of Nigeria*, <http://www.nigeria-law.org/BanksInNigeria.htm>, (accessed 19 September, 2013).

<sup>57</sup>Nigeria Police Force, *Zonal Offices of Nigeria Police Force*, <http://www.npf.gov.ng/zones/zone1/>, (accessed September 19, 2013).

primary schools, 6 public secondary schools, 21 private secondary schools, a business school and marine/oceanographic college.<sup>58</sup>

### **Selection of participants**

In Akure, participants were selected from the residential areas occupied by the educated elites such as Ijapo Estate, Awule Estate, Alagbaka, Oluwatuyi, and Alaquarters. These areas on one hand were purposely selected to examine the level of awareness of legal rights among educated women. Victoria Island, on the other hand was also purposely selected because it is the most densely populated area with the educated elites in Lagos State.

### **Participants**

In Akure and Victoria Island, six hundred and forty (640) women were asked to participate in the study: two hundred and fifty (250) in Akure and, three hundred and ninety (390) in Victoria Island. Overall, the total returned questionnaires for analysis were four hundred and sixty-two (462) from respondents who were randomly selected in the two communities.

### **Akure**

Simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents in Akure, as women in these communities shared unique characteristics. Population census enumeration data obtained from the National Population Commission was used to identify houses occupied by married couples and these households were then subject to a ballot system of simple randomization to select the respondents from each quarter. Out of 250 administered questionnaires, 178 questionnaires were returned for analysis, which represents 71.2 per cent of the total administered questionnaires: Ijapo Estate 42 (23.6%); Awule Estate 34(19.1%); Alagbaka 31(17.4%); Oluwatuyi 44(24.7%); and, Alaquarters 27(15.2%). Married women, irrespective of their age, profession, and length of marriage responded to the study.

### **Victoria Island**

Victoria Island is a cluster of educated elite, and obtaining various demographic characteristics is simple. The geographical distribution of households in Victoria Island is not similar to Akure. Cluster random technique was employed to select three hundred and ninety (390) respondents from population census enumeration areas in Victoria Island. Out of three hundred and ninety (390) administered questionnaires, two hundred and eighty four (284) were returned, which represents 72.8 per cent of the total administered questionnaires.

### **Data collection**

The questionnaire included a combination of close-ended and open-ended questions to elicit information from the respondents (Appendix). Two female research assistants were employed to administer the questionnaires. The research assistants underwent two weeks of training to provide assistance and explanation to the respondents wherever necessary.

It is the culture of women to seek the permission of the household head on any issue to do with the family; in the case of the selected areas, the household heads were males. Permission of the respondent's spouse was sought before the questionnaire was administered, which illustrated an inherent problem. Many women that were contacted directly for responses referred the researcher to the head of household, if around, or asked the researcher to book an appointment for a later date for permission to be obtained before attending to the questionnaires.

Different numbers of questionnaires were distributed: Akure (250) and Victoria Island (390). This is so, because of the experiences gleaned from the pre field survey. But, this does not affect the overall outcome of the survey. Generally, even with the power distribution in the household, the respondent's spouses gave the researchers breathing space, this allowed for robust explanations and responses to open-ended questions.

<sup>58</sup>City Population, *Eti-Osa (Local Government Area)*, <http://www.citypopulation.de/php/nigeria-admin.php?adm2id=2806>, (accessed 30 April, 2013).

### **Pilot survey**

A pilot survey was carried out in similar areas like Ikeja, Lagos and Oba-Ile, Akure to determine the schedule and availability of the respondents. Based on these results, the administration of questionnaires was executed between 5–6pm for a period of six weeks.

### **Data analysis**

Six hundred and forty (640) questionnaires were distributed, out of which, four hundred and sixty two (462) questionnaires were returned, duly completed, and analyzed. The response rate was 72.1 per cent, which was determined as being adequate to produce statistically significant findings. Data analysis was performed by a simple cross-tabulation analysis to test variables such as severity of domestic violence, nature of domestic violence cases, resolution of domestic violence cases, and reporting of cases of domestic violence to the police. Answers to open-ended questions were transcribed by the researcher, which were then analyzed by the thematic method of analysis. Inferences were made from the data collected through open-ended questions to support and complement the data from closed-ended questions.

## **RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

The following paragraphs present the analysis of data collected from the four hundred and sixty two (462) respondents from the two heterogeneous communities. The analysis includes the socio-demographic background of the respondents, severity of domestic violence, level of education of the respondents, reported cases of domestic violence, factors responsible for unreported cases of domestic violence to the police, and eradication mechanisms of reporting.

### **SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

#### **Age of respondents**

The respondents' age distribution was as follows: 18-28(118 (25.5%)); 29-39(154(33.4%)); 40-50 (106(22.9%)); 51-61(52(11.3%)); and, 62 and above (32(6.9%)). The results of the survey show that domestic violence has no age limit and it affects all age groups. Domestic violence was more prevalent among young adults as the survey results found that 96 of 118(81.4%) and 121 of 154 (78.6%) were from 18 to 39 years and 24 of 106(22.6%) were in the 40-50 age group; 52(5.8%); and, 1 of 32 (3.1%) were respondents of 50 years and above. As people age, incidences of domestic violence seem to decline.

#### **Level of education**

Data was collected on the socio-economic characteristics which show that education may not be a barrier to domestic violence, as 40 out of 131 respondents with post-secondary education had experienced domestic violence, followed by 53 out of 109 respondents with secondary education, 37 out of 56 respondents with only primary education and 7 respondents out of 29 with no formal education.

#### **Types of families**

The data obtained revealed that the majority of the respondents were from a polygamous family 264(57.1%). The data also revealed that domestic violence was common among women whose husbands are polygamous (77.7%). This is not to say that domestic violence does not occur in monogamous homes, as the data collected showed that 32(6.9%) of respondents from monogamous homes were also subjects of abuse in the two heterogeneous communities.

#### **Employment status of respondents**

It is important to examine the economic status of the respondents, to determine whether wealth correlates with cases of domestic violence. The data collected indicated that there is no relationship between a woman's economic status and domestic violence. A total of 315(68.2%) of the respondents were employed, yet, many of them did not report cases of domestic violence, while only 147(31.8%) of the respondents were unemployed. This shows that many women, both employed or unemployed, do not report cases of domestic violence.



## REPORTED CASES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

### Severity of domestic violence

According to the responses provided by the participants, domestic violence in the two communities occurs frequently: Victoria Island 216(76.0%) and Akure 371(79%). The forms of domestic violence experienced by the respondents were verbal abuse 78(17.1%), physical abuse 249(53.9%), and economic and emotional deprivation 134(29%).

### Cross tabulation of level of education, with reported cases of domestic violence

The cross tabulation of the respondents' level of education and reported cases of domestic violence to the police was calculated as follows: Victoria Island, 131(48.1%); 109(38.4%); 37(13.1%); and, 7(25%) of the respondents had post-secondary, secondary, primary education and no formal education respectively. In Akure, 40(22.5%); 53(29.8%); 56(31.5%); and, 29(16.5%) of respondents had post-secondary, secondary, primary education and no-formal education respectively.

In Akure, the level of education was not proportionate to the rate of reported cases of domestic violence. Out of the respondents with post-secondary and secondary education only 6(15%) and 4(7.6%) respectively reported cases of domestic violence to the police. The cross tabulation figures show that there is no significant relationship between the respondents' levels of education and their levels of reported cases of domestic violence to the police.

### Reasons for not reporting domestic violence

Simple percentage tabulations were used to describe the reasons why most cases of domestic violence were not reported. The following factors were identified in the data collected: cultural inhibition 97(21%), distance of police post/station 194(42%), lack of legal awareness 61(13.2%), and community attitude 110(23.8%).

Respondents were asked "Why do you refuse to report the case of domestic violence to police?" The results revealed that 225 out of 284 (79.2%) of respondents from Victoria Island and 164 of 178 (92.1%) from Akure said that trivialization of domestic violence and trauma in the hands of police discouraged them from reporting cases of domestic violence.

### Preference for reporting domestic violence

Regardless of their level of education, the respondents in the two communities indicated that they do want to report cases of domestic violence to the police. Women in Victoria Island and Akure stated police mishandling and cultural inhibition are reasons for not reporting. In Victoria Island, domestic violence victims prefer reporting to other authorities, such as family head 26(9.1%), community head 21(7.4%), family friend 93(32.8%), neighbors 115(40.5%), and traditional ruler 16(5.6%). In Akure, the respondents would report cases of domestic violence to the following authorities: family head 29(16.3%); community head 30(16.9%); family friend 55(30.9%); neighbor 13(7.3%); and traditional ruler 47(26.4%). Data obtained from the open-ended questions answered by respondents in the two communities which were translated, thematically revealed the following about the preference for authorities other than the police to report cases of domestic violence to:

"Reporting to police is out of the question *sic*. Our culture does not approve this, but you are protected culturally if you report to the family head, compound head, family friends, community head and other traditional figures. The traditional figures always face reality and they are decisive. Besides, reporting to the police is like a waste of time. Police cannot protect you if your husband divorces you. They simply don't have the capacity."

"I cannot report to police because our laws are very weak and do not protect women's interests. When it comes to women's protection, our police perform very poorly. Wives survive at the mercy of their husbands. No social protection, no economic empowerment exist, many women are subjected to further trauma by reporting to the police. Also, there is no referral system (social worker, social care, public complaint) for those who reported cases of domestic violence. Moreover, police posts are far from this community. In my own case, I prefer reporting to my family friends, who can stand by the truth, regardless of whose ox is gored."

"How should I report a problem between my husband and I to the police. Police do compound problems. They are slow in action, especially on a reported case of forceful sexual intercourse. They trivialize and treat it as a family issue. I do report cases of battery involving my husband and I to the community head because of the dispatch manner by which he handles such

matter . . . I remembered my husband was sentenced to community work and asked to pay a fine to me before he could stop beating me.”

“Mark you, Victoria Island is an elites’ community. We don’t have traditional authorities here. Left to me, I do report any trouble in my family to my family friends, most especially the ‘best man’. I neither reported any issue to my in-laws nor my parents. I don’t report to police because police will not help matters. Police waste time, prolong issues, demand bribes and hardly take the side of law.”

### **Custom, tradition, culture and unreported cases of domestic violence**

The respondents stated that culture, custom and tradition also inhibit reporting of domestic violence to the police. In Akure, 119(37.8%) and Victoria Island 196(62.2%) responded “yes”, that they could not report domestic violence because of the influence of culture, custom and tradition. One participant described the custom, culture and tradition as the following:

“We do not report cases of domestic violence in our culture because we believe that reporting destroys family. Our culture is against going to court on family related matters. Domestic violence is considered as a family issue that a family head can handle.”

“The institution of marriage confers ultimate authority on men once he has paid your bride wealth (dowry). Once you have got married to a man, you are forbidden to go back to your parents or report your husbands. You cannot take your husband to court and return to him. We assume court destroys marriage. That is what we were brought up to believe as women.”

“Men are seen as a ‘wife’s crown’ in our culture. If you lose your husband you lose your crown. No more respect for you! It is better to keep it to yourself if you don’t want to lose your respect in the community. Our culture is against reporting domestic violence. The society tags a divorce or separated women and calls them names, such as ‘returnee’, ‘gigolo’, ‘cursed’, ‘harlot’, ‘never contented’ etc.”

### **Eradication of domestic violence**

Education of women and young girls is imperative; educated women should become informed and aware of their rights. Women also reported needing social support and protection such as child welfare benefits, healthcare benefits, nursing mother benefits, unemployment benefits, and stipends for women with domestic issues. These forms of allowances and protection could improve the level of reported cases of domestic violence. Men also need mass education on women’s freedom and rights. They should be educated on gender equality, empowerment and eradication of all forms of cultural discrimination against women.

The followings responses were gathered from the open-ended questions asked to women in the two heterogeneous communities:

“In my own opinion, I don’t think domestic violence can be totally eradicated. It can only be reduced. Our men are our subscribed to tradition and culture. Fight against domestic violence is a straight fight between culture, tradition and law. I believe, if there are enabling laws that would make men to be accountable for any act of domestic aggression, there will be hope . . . bring violators of domestic violence law to justice, let them pay fines and compensation. Others would learn from them.”

“Mass education and legal punishment is the way out of domestic violence. Our law officers need to be proactive on issues related to domestic violence. Women must be ready to report. Women who dare the consequences of reporting must be protected and supported.”

“Domestic violence can be reduced only if the economic conditions of women are improved; if women are no longer depending on their husbands for subsistence . . . Lift women out of poverty, create protective laws, domestic violence would become history.”

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The magnitude of domestic violence in the two heterogeneous communities selected in this study was high. It seems as partners grow older, cases of domestic violence decline. The study revealed that most cases of domestic violence were not reported to the police, rather, the respondents preferred to report to other authority figures such as family heads, community heads, family friends, neighbor, and traditional rulers. The practice of not reporting is a product of culture, custom and tradition. The trivializing attitude of police in reported cases of domestic violence also discourages reporting. These reasons contribute to why abused women hide cases of domestic violence. Police trivialize cases of

domestic violence and often treat it as a family affair. Corruption and lack of confidence in the integrity and capacity of the Nigerian police have led to avoidance of reporting to the police.

In the two communities selected, women suffer high levels of domestic violence, such as physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, economic and social deprivation. Many abused women adjust to whatever situation they find themselves in their husbands' homes because tradition and culture do not support reporting violence. Many of the women who participated in the study live in a patriarchal society. Patriarchy is a challenge to liberal feminists who seek to strengthen laws as a way out of gender discrimination, gender inequality, oppression and exploitation.

Participants in Akure explained tradition and culture as reasons why incidences of domestic violence were not reported to the police. Women's positions were revealed in the data collected where 55(30.9%) of respondents in Akure agreed that tradition and culture were reasons for not reporting domestic violence to the police. The fear of the unknown, what would happen to the home and children, and consequences of reporting to the police undermine the readiness of women to report cases of domestic violence. The trauma and scolding of women that follow have also been found to affect the extent of reported cases of domestic violence.

The level of education of women has no significant effect on reported cases of domestic violence. Many highly educated women in the two communities did not see reporting of domestic violence to the police as the best option. In the two communities, 90(70%) of the respondents with secondary education did not report cases of domestic violence to the police. Instead of reporting to the police, women prefer to report to the family head, community leader, family friends, neighbors, and traditional ruler as noted above.

This study concludes that police and courts need a new approach. Police should be trained, attend workshops, conferences, and seminars on a regular basis to learn how to properly investigate and treat victims of violence. To eradicate domestic violence, police need to create a special unit in each command to handle reported cases. Additional police stations and posts should be created to make police more accessible to women. Courts should decide cases of domestic violence without fear or favor. Additionally, cultural consideration should be separated from legal reasoning when adjudicating domestic violence cases. The government needs to create victim support centres for women. It should create social support, protection and empowerment for women. Finally, women who have the courage to speak out about domestic should be supported irrespective of marital status. Only a truly coordinated effort has the potential to reduce the incidence of domestic violence in communities throughout Nigeria.

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## Appendix

The questionnaire contained the following items:

1. Location: Akure  Victoria Island
2. Age: 18-28  29-39  40-50  51-61  62 and above
3. Level of Education: No Formal Education  Primary  Secondary  Post-Secondary
4. Are you employed? Yes  No
5. Type of Family: Polygamous  Monogamous
6. Have you ever been beating by your husband? Yes  No   
If yes, how many times? .....
7. Has your husband pressurized you to have sex more often with than necessary?  
Yes  No
8. Has your husband ever assaulted you physically? Yes  No   
If yes, describe .....
9. Have ever been assaulted verbally by your husband? Yes  No   
If yes ,describe the form .....
10. Has assault by your husband ever led to visiting hospital for medical assistance? Yes  No
11. Do you ever report a case of domestic violence to the Police? Yes  No   
If no, who do you report to? .....
12. Why do you refuse to report the case to the police? .....
13. Is there any social support in the community for a victim of domestic violence?  
Yes  No
14. Is there any culture, customor tradition for bidden you from reporting incidence of Domestic violence? Yes  No
15. In your own opinion, tell me how you think incidence of domestic violence can be eradicated?.....