

THE NATURE AND INCIDENCE OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION IN THE NIGER DELTA.

OGBANGA MINA M (PhD).

Department of Social Work. Faculty of Social Sciences. University of Port-Harcourt, River State. Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

This study examined the nature and incidence of gender based violence and social work intervention in the Niger Delta. It specifically focused on three purposively selected states in the Niger Delta; Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta. Descriptive and qualitative research designs were adopted to analyse and investigate the nature and incidence of gender based violence and implications for social work practice. Primary and secondary sources of data collection were adopted. Our primary sources derived largely from direct field data collected through the use of structured questionnaire which was administered directly to 1,200 participants in the study States. The sample size was derived through the Taro Yamane statistical tool, additional field data were sourced through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) The qualitative data for the study were analyzed using tables and simple percentages. The findings of the study showed that gender based violence have been in existence while women remain silent in the Niger Delta.

Introduction:

The term gender based violence (GBV) implies various forms of violence against women and the girl child (WHO, 2012). There are complex dimensions of gender based violence including sexual violence. The World Health Organization (WHO) (2011) defines sexual violence as: 'Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work'. Since 1945 following the UN declaration on human rights, issues of gender transformation have not been given adequate policy

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attention in most developing societies. Gender based violence has been one of the most widely employed terms in women and girl child violence studies (Heise, Ellsberg & Guttemoeller, 1999; WHO, 2005; Moreno, Jasen, Ellsberg, Heise & Watts, 2006; Anderson, Ho-foster, Mitchell, Scheepers & Goldstien, 2007). In the 1990s following the end of the Cold War and triumph of liberal democracy, the concerns on gender equality re-emerged in social discourses leading to the Beijing Declaration of 1995 and adoption of 35% affirmative action for women's participation in governance and decision making (Amadi & Amadi, 2015). Related international instruments for women's emancipation and gender transformation include the convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The aim of this work is to examine the nature and incidence of gender based violence and social work intervention in the Niger Delta.

The objective of the study

To investigate the nature and incidence of gender based violence and how social work practice could mitigate the violence in the Niger Delta.

Research Question

What is the nature and incidence of gender based violence and how has social work practice mitigated the violence in the Niger Delta?

Research Assumption

The higher the incidence of gender based violence the more likely that there will be need for social work intervention in the Niger Delta?

Significance of Study

Policy Significance

The findings from this study will be useful to various policy makers who seek to understand the nature, level and incidence of gender based violence in the Niger Delta. In particular, government officials, law makers, political leaders, CSOs and stakeholders from all walks of life will find the study findings useful. In particular those seeking to understand the cardinal roles of social workers will benefit from

this study as it provides policy and research guidance and insights for policy makers. Again, it will be useful to policy makers and researchers seeking to investigate the roles of social workers in mitigating violence particularly in a developing democracy like Nigeria. In particular, the study will be useful in the Niger Delta as the persistent problems of gender based violence calls for urgent policy response that could stimulate new value re-orientation for women seeking for socio-political transformation. Importantly, the study helps to understand the patterns of State intervention and policy response to gender based violence which require depth of knowledge and policy attention.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study focused on three purposively selected States in the Niger Delta namely Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta. These are among the states with socio-cultural practices that undermine the advancement of women. The study findings encountered several potential limitations. First, our field data were collected from both literate, semi- literate and illiterate women, gender focused organizations and, therefore, the extent to which the findings generalize to a more heterogeneous sample of gender based violence seem largely complex. Again, the cultural practices in most of the rural households constrained women from responding freely to our research questions. Another key limitation of the study was the geographical locations and topography of the riverine Niger Delta where it was difficult to reach out to several households in the swamp communities.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Our framework of analysis draws from social anomy theory. The theory provides depth of knowledge on the ongoing social practices that are antithetical to the existence of women. The concept first emerged in 1893, with French sociologist Emile Durkheim. It posits that formlessness is a state where the expectations of behavior are unclear, and the system has broken down. This aptly explains the nature and dynamics of gender based violence in which women are repeatedly abused, molest and maltreated by the men and institutional apparatus for social justice and equity remains weak or rather unable to emancipate gender based violence.

The idea of anomie denotes absence of normal ethical or social standards (Gerber&, Macionis, 2010). Sociologist, *Robert K Merton* (1938) advanced some important insights on "social structure and anomie", pointing out the relationship and interaction of the social structure within the social construction of anomie. Roberts & Rokeach (1956) examined the linkages between "anomie, authoritarianism, and prejudice" their theoretical debate perhaps reinforces the understanding of the patriarchal authoritarian practice in which women are subjected under men. This is increasingly suggestive of the fact that violence against women is socially anomalous and should be adequately resolved to meet the increasing challenges of gender transformation. Related theoretical accounts critique the notion of anomie in ethical contexts, while others propagate the theoretical relevance of the debate. Stephen R. Marks (1974) provides useful understanding of the theoretical reimits of Durkheim's Theory of Anomie. Marco Orru (1983) had examined the works of both Jean Marie Guyau and Émile Durkheim, in providing a theoretical model that links anomie to ethical considerations. While Featherstone, and Deflem (2003) explores the contextual interface between "Anomie and Strain" as well as consequences drawing from Robert Merton's theoretical analysis. Crossman, Ashley (2019) had recently engaged with re-examination of 'the sociological definition of anomie.'

The Concept of Social Work

Since 1999 following Nigeria's nascent democracy several social work practices have been evident. In the Niger Delta there are such organizations engaged in social work intervention (see **table2**) within various areas of priority and focus. In the 2000s the Institute of Social Work of Nigeria (ISOWN) was formed. The institute trains, develop capacity, consults and offer a wide variety of professional social work services and care(ISOWN,2018).It thrives also to impact on social welfare policies that could make life meaningful to people especially those living in Least developed countries (LDCs) of the world (ISOWN,2018).

So a concept social work examines the patterns and dynamics of social engagement by groups or individuals to improve the over status of a group or the society as a whole. Bogo, (2006) has provided some conceptual exploration of social work in some developing societies including salient processes and practice of social work. Within cultural contexts, Boyle, & Springer, (2001) examine a cultural competence measure for social work with specific populations. Their central aim is to determine how cultural constructions of societies could

stimulate or undermine social work practice. In the Niger Delta there is evidence of a number of organizations engaged in social work practice. What is largely unknown is the extent such practices have been able to mitigate gender based violence.

Between 2011 and 2012 PIND a non-governmental organization in the Niger Delta commissioned two organizations to carry out studies on differential impacts of poverty, inequality and conflict between women /men/boys /girls. The 2011 study had the theme; Gender Assessment of the Niger Delta Region while the theme of the 202 study was Identification and Analysis of Traditional Gender Norms and its Impact on Generating Equitable Socio-Economic Development in Selected LGAs in Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa and Ondo States, both studies found that women have been increasingly marginalized in the Niger Delta.

Research Methodology

This study largely adopted qualitative and descriptive research designs. The population for the study was drawn from purposively selected female household members from the Niger Delta. The Niger Delta area has an estimated population of about 30 million people (Census, 2006), the region accounts for more than 23% of Nigeria's total population. The sample size for the study was derived from this population. The study adopted both purposive and simple random sampling techniques. There are nine (9) states in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. The sample was collected from female households member of the three (3) purposively selected States of the Niger Delta namely Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta. These are people who are experienced and knowledgeable on issues of gender based violence and can tell with relative ease their experience. The sources of data for this study were both primary and secondary. The study critically selected the relevant data. Such data were sourced from text books, journal articles, official Government publications, internet materials, relevant periodicals, magazines and newspapers. The primary sources of data included the use of questionnaire, interviews with women groups and their leaders, academicians, NGOs and similar CSOs, three(3)focused group discussions(FGDs)which were conducted in each of the three selected states with about 1-15 persons across age groups between 18-60.This included women groups, community leaders and youth leaders. The questionnaire was administered directly by the researcher with two research assistants. The study collected secondary data through library

research review and desk top analysis. The method of data analysis for this research was descriptive. The study used of tables and simple percentages to analyze relevant data.

Presentation of Data

Table 1: Percentage of response from Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta States

RIVERS							
Research Statement 1 : Investigate the nature and incidence of gender based violence and how social work practice can mitigate the violence in the Niger Delta							
Statement Items	SA	%	A	%	SDA	%	DA
1. Gender based violence is evidenced in the Niger Delta	300	75	60	15	36	9	4
2. Widowhood practice is common in most Niger Delta communities.	320	80	40	10	30	24	10
3. There are evidences of rape, battering of women of in the Niger Delta	312	78	58	14.5	20	5	10
4. Social Workers can enlighten women to overcome vulnerabilities	400	100	-	-	-	-	-

associated with gender based violence								
	Total							400

Source: Field, (2018)

Data Analysis

Table 1 above shows the percentage of response of respondents from Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta States on item statement one which is; **Gender based violence is evidenced in the Niger Delta**, 300 respondents which is 75% Strongly Agreed, 60 respondents which is 15% Agreed, 36 respondents which is 9% Strongly Disagreed, while 4 respondents which is 1% Disagreed.

In Bayelsa State, 250 respondents 62.5 % Strongly Agreed, 50 respondents 12.5 % Agreed, 10 respondents 2.5% Disagreed while another 10 respondents 2.5% Strongly Disagreed. In Delta State, 210 respondents 52.5 % Strongly Agreed, 90 respondents 22.5 % Agreed, 60 respondents 1.5 % Strongly Disagreed, while 40 respondents 10 % Disagreed. From the scores of the respondents, a total of 936 respondents which is 78% of 1,200 respondents accepted that there are various nature and incidence of gender based violence and how social work practice can mitigate the violence in the Niger Delta, while 264 which is 22% of 1,200 had a contrary response.

In question two which is; **widowhood practice is common in most Niger Delta communities.**, responses are as follows;

In Rivers State, 320 respondents which is 80 % Strongly Agreed, 40 respondents which is 10 % Agreed, 30 respondents which is 24% Strongly Disagreed, while 10 respondents which is 2.5% Disagreed. In Bayelsa State 300 respondents 75 % Strongly Agreed, 100 respondents 25 % Agreed, non -of the respondents either Disagreed, or Strongly Disagreed. In Delta all respondents 400 which is 100 % Strongly Agreed. From the scores of the respondents a total of 1,160 respondents which is 96.6% responded in the affirmative while a total of 40 respondents which is 3.33% responded in negation.

Question three is: **There are evidences of rape, battering of women of in most households in the Niger Delta**; responses are as follows; In Rivers State, 312 respondents which is 78% Strongly Agreed, 58 respondents which is 14.5% Agreed, 20 respondents which is 5% Strongly Disagreed, while 10 respondents which is 2.5% Disagreed. In Bayelsa State, 230 respondents 57.5% Strongly

Agreed, 70 respondents 17.5 % Agreed, 60 respondents 15% Strongly Disagreed while 40 respondents 10% Strongly Disagreed.

In Delta State all 400 respondents, 100% Strongly Agreed. From the scores of the respondents, a total of 670 respondents 55.84% accepted that, There are evidence of shooting of guns and use of similar arms during politicking which negatively impact political participation in the Niger Delta, while 530 respondents which is 44.2% had a contrary response.

In Question Four which is; **Social Workers can enlighten women to overcome vulnerabilities associated with gender based violence;** are as follows;

In Rivers State, 400 respondents (all) which is 100% Strongly Agreed. In Bayelsa State, 300 respondents (75%) Strongly Agreed, 90 respondents, 22.5% Agreed, 1 respondent, 1% Strongly Disagreed, none disagreed. In Delta State 350 respondent 87.5% Strongly Agreed, 40 respondents 10% Agreed, 6 respondents 1.5% Strongly Disagreed, while 4 respondents 1 % Disagreed, there was no response on No Idea. From the scores of the respondents, a total of 1,180 respondents (98.4 %) were in affirmative while 20 respondents (1.7%) had contrary response.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary and Conclusion

This study examined gender based violence and the culture of silence among Niger Delta women and implications for social work practice. It specifically focused on three purposively selected states in the Niger Delta; Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta. Descriptive and qualitative research designs were adopted to analyse and investigate the nature and incidence of gender based violence and implications for social work practice. Primary and secondary sources of data collection were adopted. Our primary sources derived largely from direct field data collected through the use of structured questionnaire which was administered directly to 1,200 participants in the study States. The sample size was derived through the Taro Yamane statistical tool, additional field data were sourced through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) The qualitative data for the study were analyzed using tables and simple percentages. The findings of the study showed that gender based violence have been in existence while women remain silent in the Niger Delta. We recommended the need for social work practice and intervention to create more awareness on gender emancipation and in particular mitigation of gender based

violence in the Niger Delta which among others included female genital mutilation, single and gang rape, intimate partner violence, widowhood practice among others. The key findings and analysis of this study has sufficiently answered the questions of gender based violence and social work practice in the Niger Delta and importantly provided some knowledge and understanding of nature and incidence of gender based violence and key measures to mitigate same through social work practice. This study has sufficiently addressed the research questions and central objectives. The point the study has been emphasizing is that Niger Delta women, irrespective of their contributions have been victims of gender based violence. Specifically, the paper advanced interrelated arguments from our field and qualitative data. First, a new value re-orientation is needed for gender violence transformation among women. Secondly, more proactive social work intervention and engagement is inevitable to redirect the actions of men towards women in line with our objectives.

Recommendations

Against the background of the problems posed by gender based violence in the Niger Delta and from the findings of this study, a number of recommendations are necessary to address the identified problems. WHO (2012) in addressing sex related gender based violence recommended that there is need to involve relevant stakeholders in key areas of gender violence mitigation. In the context of our study, we strongly recommend the involvement of social workers. WHO (2003) recommend the need to provide a comprehensive response to the needs of survivors of gender based violence. Additional recommendation includes providing comprehensive health care and medico-legal services for rape survivors (WHO, 2012).

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