

The Shadow Pandemic: Gender-based Violence in Northern Nigeria

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The shadow Pandemic: Gender-based Violence in Northern Nigeria

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Abbreviations

WHO	World Health Organization
IPV	Intimate partner violence
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
CRSV	Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
SARS-COV-2	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2
AFA	Alliances for Africa
UNTEVAW	UN Trust fund to end violence against women
IDP	Internally displaced persons
DV	Domestic violence
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
VAPP	Violence Against Persons (Prohibition)
CEDAW	Convention on The Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women
GBV	Gender-based violence

COVID-19	Corona virus disease-2019
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
ICT	Information and communication technology
NDHS	Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey
NCDC	National center for disease control
SDG	Sustainable development goals
STD	Sexually transmitted disease
GDP	Gross domestic product
UNICEF	United Children Education Fund
NGO	Non-governmental organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Fund

Abstract

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Gender-based violence has been in existence long before the emergence of previous epidemics and pandemics. While Northern Nigeria is faced with the challenge of security, it has equally received its fair share of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. This thesis aims to enable a better understanding of the impact of Covid-19 gender-based violence in northern Nigeria. This research investigated gender inequality in labor markets, education, cultural and familial relations, and political participation and how they contributed to the increase in

gender-based violence during the Covid-19 pandemic. Following the use of a comprehensive qualitative research plan, I offered an insight on how I reconceptualized gender-based violence experienced by women and girls caused by the restriction of movement during the Covid-19 lockdown.

To answer the research question, 13 women were interviewed. The findings/results of the study also revealed that the emergence of Covid-19 and the restriction of movements during the lockdown caused and has exacerbated gender-based violence in northern Nigeria.

Keywords: Covid-19; pandemic, lockdown; gender-based violence; domestic violence; shadow pandemic; northern Nigeria; women; girls.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 General Introduction

“As the world battles with the COVID-19 pandemic, emerging evidence indicates a sharp rise in gender-based violence (GBV), especially violence against women and girls. Referred to as the Shadow Pandemic, * the rise of GBV in Nigeria during the COVID-19 crisis will have life-threatening consequences for women and girls and a profound impact on their opportunities and life trajectory. These impacts will have consequences that will ripple across communities and the whole country as Nigeria begins to recover from the detrimental economic and health impacts of the crisis. *” (United Nations Nigeria, Brief, 4th may, 2020).

Northern Nigeria makes up 19 of the 36 states in Nigeria. It is majorly influenced by the advent of Islam, making their culture intertwined with religion. Violence in northern Nigeria has been recurrent for over 30 years, ranging from religious conflicts to ethnic wars. Although a lot of the unrest has been curbed, the recent insurgency (Boko Haram) has been a major cause of tension in the north.

Young women in northern Nigeria have continuously faced endless sociocultural restrictions which have hindered them from reaching their full potential. These restrictions have equally stopped them from actively and fully participating in government and politics. Northern society is extremely patriarchal and pays no heed to the voices or opinions of women. When a woman tries to break free of these societal norms, she is often seen as rebellious and, in most cases, stigmatized and castigated. Furthermore, a woman's success is linked to her husband, children, or anything else but herself, whether she is submissive or decisive, she is hardly ever taken seriously.

One of the contradictions revolving around the acceptance of women in societal participation both in the north and other parts of Nigeria is the notion that women are less educated and qualified than men when on the one hand, women's education is seen as a waste of resources in most parts of Nigeria. In as much as there has been an improvement in this situational mindset, it is moving at a 'snail's pace and it will take decades if not a century for northern Nigeria to catch up with the rest of the world on gendered perspectives (Simon-Karu, 2022).

According to previous reports, Nigeria is one of the sub-Saharan African nations with the highest incidence of female domestic violence, with two-thirds of women

reporting experiencing violence from male partners (International, 2016). The social relationships between women and men in Nigeria, like in most African civilizations and societies, establish the setting of female domestic abuse.

In addition to having to completely give themselves over to their husbands, women are traditionally expected to be domestically available to fulfill their partners'/spouses' psychological, physical, and sexual needs. To reinstate traditional gender roles and male dominance, women who disobey these expectations are beaten and coerced (Amoakohene, 2004; Ofei-Aboagye, 1994; Okenwa Emegwa et al., 2009; Tenkorang et al., 2013).

Northern Nigeria is not an exception to the high prevalence of domestic and marital violence in sub-Saharan Africa. However, earlier research that looked at marital violence in northern Nigeria rarely looked at the role of ethnicity in maintaining such violence. Anecdotal evidence indicates that such violence differs among the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. What's more, it is not apparent how the various cultural traditions connected to these ethnic groups affect domestic and marital violence against women. We close this significant knowledge gap. According to our theoretical predictions, Igbo women experienced more physical and sexual marital abuse than Hausa or Yoruba women.

Multivariate results showing that Igbo women reported marital violence more frequently than Yoruba women confirm this (Nwabunike & Tenkorang, 2015).

The high prevalence of GBV has been acknowledged by the Nigerian government. The House of Representatives in Abuja denounced genital mutilation and all other forms of injustice against women on the occasion of the 2016 International Day for Women. As evidenced by the alarming statistics of physical and sexual violence against women and girls, Hon. Nkeiruka Onyejeocha, a local member of the National House of Representatives for Abia State, expressed concern that there are still many societal barriers preventing women from reaching their full potential. To ensure that women are given the same chances and incentives at work, she urged the promotion of gender parity (Oyedele, 2016).

It is important to recognize the advancements as demonstrated by the adoption of the Child's Rights Act and the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015 (VAPP) which has founded its laws and principles in accordance with the convention on the elimination of all forms of violence against women (CEDAW). The VAPP, which aims to eradicate all forms of violence in Nigerian peoples' public and private lives, was approved by the Nigerian Senate in May 2015. However, the new law has only been put into effect thus far in the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja, elaborating on the need for additional action to better the position of women in Nigeria. The declaration upholds the right to protect

human rights by offering victims the best possible protection, remedies, and punishment for criminals, among other things. As it forbids multiple forms of GBV like rape, physical harm, female circumcision, domestic abuse, economic abuse, substance abuse, abandoning a spouse, children, or other dependent without support, battery, denying people their freedom, incest, indecent exposure, and others, it serves as a legislative and legal framework for the prevention of violent acts against all vulnerable people, especially empowering women, and girls. The Act's stated goal is to outlaw any traditional behavior or traditions that have a negative impact on the fundamental rights of women and girls, including marriage as trade, forced/arranged marriage, and child marriage (Kozieł, 2017).

Before the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, women continuously faced a lot of difficulties relating to gender inequalities ranging from unequal job opportunities, paid work, and political participation to domestic and sex related violence. Data has shown that between half and two-thirds of Nigerian women have experienced domestic violence at least once in their lifetime, even though the numbers are higher in some cultures and ethnic groups than others. While the frequency of domestic and sexual violence cases has been recorded to be higher in the Igbo ethnic groups, followed by the Yoruba, and then the Hausa tribes, that is not to say that domestic violence does not exist amongst the Hausa ethnic group or in northern Nigeria in general. As studies have shown in other parts of this

research, Nigeria is recorded as one of the countries observing very high rates of female domestic abuse in the world (Nwabunike & Tenkorang, 2017).

The emergence of the Boko haram terrorist group puts the North-Eastern crisis in Nigeria on the map. Boko haram, which means “western education is a sin” emerged in the year 2002, in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state which is the largest city in Northeast Nigeria. In July 2009, Boko haram began attacking neighboring northern states, leaving hundreds of law enforcement officers and civilians dead and many more wounded. These attacks mainly consist of bombings, mass shootings, and executions. This caused the president to declare a state of emergency in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states (BAY) in May 2013 (Dunn, 2018). In 2020, the crisis which is considered one of the most severe in the world, requiring immediate attention and intervention had about 13 million people affected in 3 of the Northeastern states namely, Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) and 7.9 million of them required humanitarian intervention, leaving over 1.8 million people internally displaced. 79% of people displaced by this insurgency were women and children making them extremely vulnerable to crimes of gender while needing healthcare much more than men.

This research focuses on the experiences of women with regards to Gender-Based and Domestic Violence, the impact of Covid-19 on this and women and girls’ accessibility to humanitarian services provided for such anomalies in the North-

Eastern region of Nigeria, especially in relation to the lockdown and physical restrictions in the year 2020.

1.2 Current Situation of Women in Nigeria

In Nigeria, women are already at a disadvantage due to many pre-existing factors. In most traditions in Nigeria, men are placed higher in rank than women, this can be seen in terms of economic growth and opportunities, politics and even as far as land ownership and inheritance. Women are mainly seen to be fit for domestic affairs, farm work and reproduction (Olanrewaju et al., 2015).

In so many households, male children are seen as more deserving of formal education than girls because the girls are expected to become domesticated and get married at a very young age. The historical trend and beliefs which shockingly is still practiced is that males (men and boys) are superior to females (women and girls) thus placing women at a lower rank for the mere reason of gender classification. In many cultures, women are seen as the “belongings” of men. The basis for these biased analogies is based on the belief that men’s work outside the house is more valuable than the woman’s work within the household which is domestic chores and procreation (Oyekanmi, 2005).

The informal sector plays a key role in Nigeria's economy, providing 64% of its GDP in 2017 (Akpan & Cascant-Sempere, 2022). As women take up most positions in the Nigerian informal sector, policies restricting movement and economic activities have affected them more directly than it has men. This was the case with the Covid-19 lockdown in Lagos and The Federal Capital Territory, Abuja in March 30,2020.

Attributed to having the largest economy in Africa, ranked as 27th in the world in nominal GDP and the 24th largest in terms of Power Purchasing Parity in 2019, Nigeria's GDP was a whopping \$448.1 billion USD in 2019 compared to the year 2020 which was \$432.3 billion USD. Considering the immense contribution of the informal sector to the country's GDP with women mostly spearheading that sector, they were greatly affected by the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020 (The World Bank, 2020).

Traditionally, in Nigeria, as with several African countries, the physical abuse of spouses and children is widely generally allowed as a form of discipline (UNICEF, 2001). As a result of that, in hitting their children, most parents are convinced that it is an integral part of inculcating discipline in them, seemingly in

the same way as when husbands beat their wives, who are considered as children, which is a practice that must be abolished.

This particularly occurs when the woman is economically dependent on the man. The society is fundamentally patriarchal and the position of women within the plan of action is clearly lower ranking. In other words, domestic violence serves as a manner of applying compliance with the responsibility of a woman within customary society. For that reason, it is of no consequence if the woman is economically dependent or not, her capacity, as with the children is lower ranking. Violence against women in Nigeria is widely perceived to be associated with the personal realm and is often hidden from external examination. A culture of muteness fortifies the stigma associated to the victim instead of deploring the perpetrator of such crimes.

In a study on violence against women, supervised interviews with women working in the markets as well as other workplaces, girls and young women in schools and universities in Lagos state, Nigeria, 64.4% of 45 women interviewed in the workplace reported that they had experienced physical violence by a partner (boyfriend or husband), 56.6% of 48 market women interviewed admitted

encountering physical violence. Similar surveys conducted in Oyo state and other states in Nigeria gave very similar results (Aihie, 2010).

Gender-based violence is steadily on the rise, especially in developing countries as Nigeria. studies have revealed that the greater part of victims of domestic violence are sadly, women and children. The Covid-19 pandemic has revealed the true picture of domestic violence in major Nigerian cities. Most discussions about domestic violence are centered around physical abuse and other acts that could cause bodily harm, nevertheless, the present-day realities have revealed that domestic violence goes further than just physical violence.

Domestic violence exhibits itself in many ways including sexual, emotional, physical, and mental. In the past, women have been the key victims of domestic violence, but this is changing as recent data have revealed that men also suffer from domestic abuse in the home.

In Nigeria, 1 in 3 women is reported to suffer from one type of domestic violence during their lifetime. Trending forms of violence include rape, assault, murder, battery, and blackmail. Although, sexual related violence has been shown to be the most pronounced form of domestic violence experienced by a vast majority of women, the sad fact about domestic violence in Nigeria is that only

about 25% of domestic violence are reported to law enforcement agencies (Amos, 2021). The part women and girls play during calamities and crisis situations have equally been found to influence the risk factor of gender-based violence. For instance, while scarcity of water in Sahel forces women and girls to walk long distances to fetch water and firewood, there is a higher chance of their facing more exposure to the risk of harassment, sexual assault, and physical violence (Uzobo & Ayinmoro, 2021).

One of the most notable happenings that currently depicts violence against women and girls in Nigeria is the kidnapping of 276 girls from a boarding school in the dead of the night, sometime in April 2014 by boko haram in Borno state which is in the northeastern region. Most of these girls who were under 15 years of age were forced to marry members of this terrorist group, recruited, and forced to act as spies and participatory members in the execution of countless innocent people. While many women and girls have escaped from captivity, they do not have it any better back home as they have been rejected, stigmatized, and exposed to further abuse.

Since early 2014, over 2,000 women and girls in northeastern Nigeria have been kidnapped while thousands more are forced to drop out of school for fear of captivity (Kozieł, 2017).

1.3 Statement of Problem

Gender inequality and domestic violence are pre-existing situations that the Covid-19 pandemic and insurgency have brought to focus on North Nigeria. It calls for a closer look as to what gaps the government and NGO interventions have succeeded in bridging and what still needs to be done. Bringing to focus the challenges women and girls face in the homes and in the society, following the after-effects of the heightened restrictions placed by the Covid-19 lockdown. Furthermore, there has been a challenge in offering interventions in this region of Nigeria because this region has one of the highest records of illiteracy in women and girls thereby making it difficult to sensitize on this situation. In addition to this, there is a need to review/examine the cause for the increase in reported cases of gender-based and domestic violence during the Covid-19 lockdown. In this regard, I raise the following research question:

What are the determining factors that brought about an increase in gender-based violence in northern Nigeria during the Covid-19 lockdown?

To answer this question, I examined the labor market, political participation, education, and cultural and familial relations and how they contributed to the rise of gender-based violence during the lockdown.

The investigation showed that:

- i. There is a significant difference between the reported cases and the actual cases of GBV during and after the lockdown
- ii. Conflict-related sexual violence has exacerbated due to the Covid-19 lockdown.
- iii. Covid-19 lockdown and restriction of movement has a significant effect on early adolescent and forced marriages.

1.4 Objectives

The main objective of this study is to assess the impact of Covid-19 on gender-based violence in northern Nigeria. Specifically, this research is designed to:

- i. Obtain firsthand information from women in the study area.
- ii. Critically examine the cause of the upsurge in the reported cases of domestic violence during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- iii. Examine how certain indicators (political participation, education, cultural and familial relations, and labor markets) play a role in the lives of women, with regards to the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is necessary because women in Northern Nigeria have been muted for decades on end. Owing to their lack of basic/formal education, they mostly lack knowledge and information on their fundamental human rights, especially with regards to healthcare and gender equality. This study will reveal the situation of women who are being violated and suffer in silence, almost accepting it as a norm while calling the attention of stakeholders to this anomaly. It will provide me a platform to come up with proposed solutions to abate or mitigate inequalities and bias faced by women as it relates to domestic violence and access to interventions and humanitarian services during the Covid-19 pandemic particularly in the Northern part of Nigeria. Because women are at the frontlines, majorly seen as being responsible for domestic affairs, they care for their homes and by extension, the lives of others even before themselves, putting their lives at risk while being brutalized. It is quite evident that there is limited literature and research work based on domestic violence and the impact of Covid-19 on women in Northern Nigeria. This research will provide extensive information as well as awareness on the topic as well as bring to light, the

experiences of women and girls with regards to gender-based violence during
pandemic and epidemic breakouts

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Gender inequality and Pandemic in Nigeria

As a result of the pandemic and its antecedent stay-at-home initiative, as directed by the presidential task force on Covid-19 matters, Gender-based Violence (GBV) has been on the increase and so has child marriage and child abuse which inevitably leads to child pregnancies accompanied by health-related complications. While women are participatory members of all the Covid-19 councils, they do not have a say in making key decisions and these bodies do not consider GBV services as essential (Oxfam, 2022) .

Gender inequality refers to unequal or biased actions or treatments directed at males or females (UNDP, 2013).

Gender-based Violence is defined by the UN as a blanket statement “for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person’s will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between females and males.” That is to say that GBV is generally identified by physical, sexual, mental, or economic abuse exacted on a person, typically a woman or girl, and encompasses sexual

harassment, female genital mutilation, child marriage, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviors. Gender-based violence is a significant historical and global challenge that has been recounted by the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) as “the most prevalent yet least detected human rights violation in the world” It is a social issue that covers people of all groups and is widespread in all levels of social and economic ranking in human society. Constructively, we cannot terminate extreme poverty or accomplish the united nation’s global goals if GBV remains such a preeminent problem (Okunola, 2021b).

The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic and its lockdown restrictions can be said to have increased the rate of domestic violence in women mostly caused by their intimate partners. Restriction of movement, social distancing, work from home, and the likes of these have caused female victims of domestic violence to live with their abusers for longer periods of time, at home and with a good number of shelters, humanitarian services on DV, and federal courts closed, it left them with nowhere to turn to (Oloniniyi et al., 2022).

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is a global cause for worry with an important public health impact. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines IPV as any behavior within an intimate relationship by an intimate partner that

gives rise to physical, psychological, or sexual trauma to those in the relationship. It is one of the most rampant types of violence encountered by women. A majority of IPV cases reported are committed by men against women. In a World Health Organization (WHO) multi-country study, women who experienced IPV were disclosed to have increased ailing health, more psychological trauma, and more suicidal thoughts and attempts than those who have not experienced such. Partner violence during pregnancy has been reported to result in poor antenatal and post-natal turn out which is one of the leading causes of low-weight births, preterm births, and even infant mortality (Benebo et al., 2018).

Research has shown that intimate partner violence (IPV) amongst pregnant women is mainly linked to sexual violence, which is often characterized by forceful sexual relations with a pregnant partner against her wish, usually accompanied by physical abuse (slapping, punching, and beating) when there is a resistance. This usually results in physical injury and possible loss of the pregnancy. Another form of abuse which is common is emotional and mental abuse which include threats, body shaming and the use of derogatory words on women (Envuladu et al., 2012).

Gender-based Violence (GBV) has been in existence before the pandemic, present in many homes worldwide. However, the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown which caused restrictions of movements have caused women to be stuck with their abusers without many social interactions and support groups.

Economic insecurity is also a major hindrance to women leaving abusive circumstances and these insecurities will equally increase the risk of child marriage, female genital mutilation, and human trafficking. Nonetheless, this pandemic has caused women in influential positions to receive a great amount of criticism, intimidation, and persecution from the public both online and offline (UN Women, 2021).

Nigeria is one of the most unsafe regions for women and girls in the world, owing to this, the Violence Against Person (Prohibition) Act, also called the VAPP law is an extremely significant legal driver that can help make the country much safer for them. This document applies only in the federal capital territory (FCT), Abuja, but there is a need for it to be adopted in the 36 states of the country as part of its state legislature for it to be of impact in the lives of every Nigerian woman and girl (Okunola, 2021a)

A total of 30 out of the 36 states in Nigeria have enacted laws prohibiting gender-based violence. This is a positive development considering that there were only 14 states with gender-based laws as of early 2020. Nigerian states are pushing for penal law reforms to make it more severe and discourage gender-based violence in the country (Obi, 2021).

It is noteworthy to mention that while intimate partner violence (IPV) and domestic violence are usually mistaken for the same thing, there is an actual difference. IPV is typically used to describe any behaviour that happens in an intimate relationship between partners or ex-partners (either married or cohabiting) which can cause physical, psychological, or sexual harm to parties involved.

Domestic violence on the other hand is also defined by WHO to encompass all acts of aggression that may be physical, psychological, sexual, or economic which is encountered within a domestic space such as the family and between intimate partners. Domestic violence is most likely against a woman, child/adolescent by an intimate male partner/cohabiting partner, parents, siblings, family relatives, or any person well acquainted with the family. Given the information below, we can agree that Intimate Partner Violence is a fraction of Domestic violence (Uzobo & Ayinmoro, 2021).

In Nigeria, the Lagos State government-run ‘Domestic and Gender Violence Response Team reported having been swarmed with heightened reports of sexual and domestic violence since the lockdown started in March.

The Lagos team, which was put in place to conduct physical arbitrations, took to online interventions using phones, social media, and 24-hour web chats to access people in abusive situations who require help/assistance. In rare cases, the team goes out to come to the aid of children and women who need help in abusive relationships.

A study, authorized by Nigeria’s Ministry of Women’s Affairs and Social Development and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Nigeria, with aid from the Norwegian Government, discovered that 28 percent of Nigerian women aged 25-29 have encountered some form of physical abuse since age 15. Furthermore, the study gave an account that 15 percent of women experienced physical violence within 12 months, while 25 percent of married women or cohabitant couples (women) have experienced violence.

The most frequent acts of violence against women in Nigeria include but are not limited to sexual harassment, physical violence, dangerous traditional practices, emotional and psychological violence, socio-economic violence, and violence against non-combatant conflict situations.

Victims of these occurrences face further challenges with the absence of structural social service systems in place in Nigeria, and access to hotlines and shelters. In addition to that, civil society groups and nongovernment organizations who have the expertise in availing support and legal expertise are rare.

A similar report described the lockdown itself as becoming the trigger, from what has been gathered about statistics of the Covid-19 escalation across the globe, the lockdown has metamorphosed into a significant problem, that is to say, women with a routine work schedule are now in confinement with an abuser whom they have cohabited with and actively made efforts to avoid over some time (Umukoro, 2020).

Owing to the Boko haram insurgency in the north-eastern region, conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) has also been on a steady rise although the argument has been that the existence of gender inequalities and domestic violence was long before the aforementioned and even Covid-19 pandemic. That

notwithstanding, one of the most widespread elucidations on this issue is that combatants use sexual violence to satisfy their sexual needs and render their opponents powerless. It is equally noteworthy to add that terrorism stems mostly from and increases poor economic conditions which is currently the core of the states in this affected region as it has become the seat of terrorism, poverty, and sexual violence (Njoku & Akintayo, 2021).

Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) is a highly infectious, sometimes life-threatening disease which is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. It is characterized by mild to moderate fever and respiratory ailment and can affect people of all ages. However, it can cause serious complications in older persons and people with underlying medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, cancer, or cardiovascular disease. Regardless, anyone can be infected with the virus and can die at any time. The safest way to keep this disease at bay is to be properly informed about it, observe social distancing while in public, and practice respiratory etiquettes like coughing in a bent elbow, using alcohol-based sanitizers, frequent washing of hands, getting tested amongst others (WHO, 2020a).

Due to the spread of Covid-19 and the enforced lockdown, there have been many intervention programs by mostly non-governmental organizations which

have been actively trying to ensure that victims of domestic and sexual violence are able to access essential humanitarian services currently. Alliances for Africa (AFA) has expressed its concern about the alarming increase in violence against women and girls in Nigeria; the Executive Director noted that the increase in domestic violence is directly linked with the pandemic as there have been increased reports of rape cases, gang rape domestic violence, sexual abuse and even child sexual abuse. In addition to this, abuse by law enforcement officials was recorded as well as inability to access sexual and reproductive health care. She went on to state that women and girls who cohabit with abusive partners used to have their jobs and schools as a getaway but have been subjected to staying at home with their abusers. The AFA project which is funded by The UN Trust fund to end violence against women (UNT EVAW) under the spotlight initiative and keys in the participation government actors, civil society groups and community members to employ better ways of protecting women and girls from abuse (UN Women, 2020c).

Following the rise in the cases of Gender-based violence during the lockdown, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in partnership with the Korean International Corporation Agency under its humanitarian program have ensured that essential services related to gender-based violence do not come to a

halt as they have continued to provide medical, mental health and psychological aid to women and girls in north eastern Nigeria who have been victims of sexual and gender-based violence in internally displaced people's (IDP) camps and many other communities facing the same plight in Borno state (UNFPA, 2020).

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Federal Government of Nigeria established the Presidential Task Force for the Control of the Covid-19 on the 7th march, 2020 whose sole duty was to implement the Government's National Response Plan (UN Women, 2020b). Travel bans (international and local) as well as movement restrictions were placed in several states while Government offices and private businesses were mandated to observe the lockdown and only essential workers were exempted (Ilesanmi & Afolabi, 2020).

Several actions have been taken by the Federal Government of Nigeria through its presidential task force (PTF-COVID-19) in conjunction with the Federal Ministry of Health to limit the spread of this disease and protect the health and lives of Nigerians. This included an initial lockdown/halt of non-essential activities, closure of schools, and bans on international flights. After 6 months, the gradual easing of the lockdown started, and this was aimed at striking a balance

between preservation of health and life of Nigerians while addressing socio-economic setbacks created by the pandemic situation (NCDC, 2020).

Nigeria's cultural historical background can be said to be one of the fundamental causes of gender disparity. Certain tribes specifically do not believe in the empowerment of women, especially for significant/leadership positions, believing that men are more deserving of such. Tribes such as the Igbo do not believe in women's right to will and inheritance, rather, a widow is inherited by her brother in-law to be an addition to his already existent number of wives. Making him the sole inheritor of her husband's assets and property. All women are fit for is mainly farm work and domestic duties (Ene-Obong et al., 2017).

Although the 5th goal of the UN sustainable Development goal (SDG) concentrates on gender equality, Nigeria is nowhere near achieving this. That is not to say that there has been no calling for the rights of women and girls in this part of the world. While women dominate the informal job sector by twice the size of men, women are still not free from discrimination and gender bias. Despite this, many studies have revealed that there exists a huge gender disparity with regards to placements in jobs and the economic sector as well. While research have shown that these biases are more evident in wage paying jobs than with the self-employed, and as with many places around the world, gender gaps in the rural

settlements are much higher than the urban areas (O. T. Adeosun & K. E. Owolabi, 2021).

2.1.1 Gender Inequality in Nigeria

Gender inequality, gender-based and domestic violence are issues which are predominant in Nigeria, especially in conflict and post-conflict regions and situations which have the highest numbers in the Northeast region. Cases of gender-based and domestic violence are largely under reported and although it is agreed to affect both sexes, women and girls are more affected by this. Domestic violence is especially reinforced by certain cultures and traditions in Nigeria which project women as objects, forever subservient to men, existing only to do their bidding (Adejumo et al., 2022).

One in three Nigerian females between the ages of 15-24 has been a victim of violence and up to two thirds of women have experienced domestic and sexual violence in their own families, despite these, cases are underreported due to social and psychological circumstances.

Several studies were carried out regarding domestic violence in Nigeria, most of which are urban settlers and a handful from the rural areas. The aim of

these studies was carried out to pinpoint the widespread presence, frequent forms of DV happening in the rural community and predictors.

The results of these studies showed that 1 in 3 pregnant women had suffered one form of domestic violence of another and a significant percentage remain unreported. About half of the survivors had experienced physical forms of violence which could result to loss of pregnancy, maternal morbidity, and infant/maternal mortality. The abusers were the current husbands, co-wives and in-laws and the major cause of this violence was usually domestic matters. It is a common fact that women in polygamous relationships/marriages are often distrustful of one another due to a scramble for the husband's attention, perceived preference, and jealousy which often gives rise to domestic violence when they live under the same roof (Ashimi & Amole, 2015).

Intimate partner violence (IPV) has been proven to contribute greatly to poor maternal health in pregnancy with a dominant rate of 14% in southern Nigeria, as against 43% in the north. There has also been a connection between IPV and access to antenatal care or health care in general. Several victims of IPV find it difficult to leave their homes to visit a hospital mostly because their partners assume that their acts will be out in the open. This poses a negative

impact on the health of expectant mothers while causing many of such pregnancies to be high risk (Dorothy Ijeoma Ezekwe-Anyia, *Intimate Partner Violence During Pregnancy and Prenatal Care Attendance in Abuja, Nigeria*,2017).

To a large extent, domestic abuse faced by pregnant women and females in general is largely due to the patriarchal nature of the African and Nigerian culture and society where a man sees himself as the lord in the household and is convinced that he has control and ownership over his partner and her body, including her rights to reproductive abilities. Unfortunately, the Nigerian society is still controlled by patriarchy, and this influences a lot of cases of IPV, causing them to be unreported due to an absence of policies which could curb these acts to a large extent. Most cases of IPV are viewed as private family affairs which should not be publicly addressed (Godiya Allanana, 2013).

Lockdown restrictions in Nigeria were regulated by individual states, creating diverse policies. For instance, gender-based violence was termed as essential in Abuja, however, Lagos initially shut down their gender-based violence response team and government-run shelters. Added to the heightened lack of access to gender-based violence services, government-enforced movement restrictions had women confined in their homes with their abusers in a space

where there was increased interactions and economic challenges. Data collected from two-thirds of the states in Nigeria recorded a 149% increase in reports of domestic violence from March to April 2020 (Roy et al., 2021).

Services like crisis centers, helplines, shelters, and safe housing, which are frequently run by civil society and women's organizations on the front lines of community response, may also be reduced, especially in the north, further limiting the very limited sources of support that women in abusive situations may have. Even in cases where the most fundamental services are still provided, it has been difficult for the various sectors to respond in a coordinated manner, social exclusion, and travel restrictions have made it difficult for these sectors to offer meaningful and pertinent support to women and girls who are victims of violence. Additionally vulnerable to violence were frontline employees, the majority of whom are female, both at home and at work (UN Women, 2020a).

Owing to this worrisome turn of events, several NGOs have emerged to assist in offering legal aid and care to victims of domestic violence. Because many of the victims of domestic violence may not have the resources and readiness to go after justice, these non-governmental organizations stand in for them. Some of the NGOs assisting victims of DV are (Amos, 2021) CLEEN Foundation, ACTS Generation, Project Alert on Violence Against Women, Crime Victims

Foundation Nigeria (CRIVIFON), Rayuwa Sexual Assault Referral Centre, BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights, and Centre for the Protection of the Abused (CEPA) The World Health Organization has equally created partnerships with the Nigerian government in a bid to elevate awareness on the health challenges of violence against women and the significance of the health sector response to gender-based violence (GBV), especially in the northeast, where thousands of conflict displaced persons are receiving humanitarian aid (WHO, 2020b).

Gender inequality is heavily influenced by cultures, traditions, and beliefs in Nigeria. Even in making the choice of a life partner, often young girls are not afforded the right to make the choice of a husband and are most times forced into early marriages without considering whether love is existent or not. The same discrimination extends to political, economic, and social participation of women in the society (Anyalebechi, 2016).

The steady provision of humanitarian services and domestic violence response for women in Northern Nigeria have been at a consistently sluggish pace and this has been an ongoing trend. In as much as the world is advancing at a fast pace, Nigeria is largely a culturally attuned country, most especially the northern

region which is widely and extremely conservative and gender biased (OCHA, 2021).

Owing to this, a major part of women and girls lack formal education and are hardly ever opportune to receive education, standard healthcare services and economic empowerment that they desire and deserve. A large portion of teenage girls are married off and are subjected to early childbirth and post-natal complications. Women usually do not have a voice in the household and that makes the men major decision makers in the family (I. Sinai et al., 2017).

Studies have shown that the shift to working from home has induced and added emotional burden, domestic “responsibilities and care work in the lives of women. This is also followed by the fear of receding income profits and even loss of jobs due to undue stress which hinders effective work from home (46.3%), some have been reported to have inability or difficulty concentrating (39.2%), while many others complained of heightened distraction (47.2%). In a survey where the question ‘are you able to effectively work from home?’ was asked, 53.7% of women said Yes while a whopping 46.3% reported No (WISCAR, 2020).

2.1.2 Gender inequality in Northern Nigeria

One of the distinct features of the societal structure of northern Nigeria is its extremely conservative nature which is shaped by religion and mostly culture. This has created a lop-sided view on gender and gender roles, which mostly perceives women to be better for domestic activities and childbearing. These and many more gendered stereotypes have been some of the major causes of heavy economic dependence and inability to achieve financial freedom amongst women in this region (Okech, 2021).

It is important to note that there is hardly enough research and analysis about gender inequality and gender-based violence experience by women and girls in the northern part of Nigeria, that notwithstanding, there have been cases of women experiencing social injustice which include, child/early marriage, arranged/forced marriage, street begging and hawking, marriage as trade, illiteracy, financial dependence, as well as violence in form of physical abuse (gender-based violence, sexual violence) and mental and emotional abuse (discrimination, verbal abuse, and male intimidation).

Two of the most notorious acts against women which stand out are:

2.1.2.1 Female genital mutilation

Although this culture is still in practice in other parts of Nigeria (Yoruba, ijaw, kanuri, igbo), it is more commonly practiced in northern Nigeria. This act is wrongly believed to be strongly tied to religion but is in fact more of a socio-cultural practice among northern women which is believed to elevate a woman's value, often done when a female child is very young or even without her consent in adolescence and early adulthood. FGM is recognized the world over as a violation of the fundamental human rights of women and girls yet its prevalent rate in Nigeria is 41% among women and girls aged 15-49 years. This practice is usually characterized by the removal of the clitoris and partial or complete removal of the labia minora, it is done locally by a traditional circumciser and without any form of anesthesia, which causes pain and sometimes, infections which lead more serious complications such as HIV, as well as difficulty in healing.

2.1.2.2 Absence of gender protection laws

The second act which is quite common in the north is the fact that women are not provided with acts/laws which cover gender-based or domestic violence in this region. This has caused a lot of unacceptable cultural practices such as “purdah” to thrive. Purdah, popularly known as *kulle* in the Hausa language, is an act of seclusion of females which was mostly practiced in the precolonial era and forced women to remain in the confinement of their houses while the men went about their businesses (Kozieł, 2017).

A disturbing discovery that grew from some financial investigations was the fact that some girls and young women in Maiduguri, Borno state gave an account of how they found themselves in transactional sexual exploitation owing to the lack of income during the Covid-19 lockdown and unfortunately, some of them have carried on with it post Covid. This has caused an incline in the needs for contraception, treatment of STDs, abortion, as well as creating an avenue for higher risks of GBV including rape (IRSC, 2022).

2.1.3 Domestic and Gender-based Violence

A recent study shows that 30% of Nigerian women and girls between the ages of 15-49 have experienced some form of sexual abuse/violence and this is owing to a lack of proper, working government policies and extensive legal framework across the country; the enforcement of the covid-19 lockdown saw the shocking rise in the situation as well as reports, as with many other countries globally.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) had existed before the present pandemic, although it was more prominent during this crucial time. Couples who are constrained to spend weeks at home together experience increased tension, which can result in resentment and hostility. According to reports from various organizations, the number of GBV cases recorded nationwide since May 2020 has increased. Due to men's idleness and inability to think of anything other than sex for most of the day, women were subjected to sex even by their spouses and partners more than they were psychologically prepared for. Contrarily, women were primarily concerned with the wellbeing of the family.

Another type of GBV had siblings from the same parents engaging in sexual activity because of the mandatory quarantine for everyone. On a few occasions, it was documented that a male teen fathered two teen girls while living

with them under the same roof. The moms would be particularly interested in the psychological effects of this act on the family. The number of unwanted pregnancies increased significantly during the pandemic crisis. Apart from the psychological impact and risk of exposure to birth and health-related issues such as mother or infant mortality, premature deliveries, and vesico-vaginal fistulas, early pregnancies in younger females have serious repercussions. There was also a rise in the number of reported cases of child marriage, especially in northern Nigeria which could possibly raise the rate of poverty in northern Nigeria and most probably, Nigeria (Olatunji & Idemudia, 2021).

While the pandemic has and still is a potential threat to the life of every human on the globe, in Nigeria, it has increased the vulnerability of women and girls to domestic violence. The lockdown, which was meant to contain the ailing health situation and concerns worldwide, created another “pandemic” which women continue to suffer from.

Whilst taking a closer look at the 3 states which were under total lockdown from March till August in Nigeria (Federal Capital Territory, Lagos, and Ogun state), it is quite alarming that domestic violence cases faced an all-time staggering high from 60 to 238 within a month (March-April) which is

documented as an increase by 297%. Compared to other states such as Benue, Cross river, and Ebonyi which did not have stringent lockdown laws enforced, the latter accounted for an increase by 53%.

In addition to this frustrating situation, a good number of domestic violence shelters had to involuntarily close or restrict their services and activities. Moreso, the restriction of movement saw an abrupt pause and postponement in pending cases in court, which caused most victims to continue cohabiting with their abusers (Young, 2020)

A rapid gender analysis of the Northern region in Nigeria was carried out to get a comprehensive outlook on the gender-related and comparative impact of Covid-19 on men, women, boys, and girls and the aim of this analysis was to make for better implementation and monitoring of humanitarian response towards Covid-19, especially in this region and some of the findings of this analysis included the following.

Covid-19 has magnified deep-seated gender inequalities, and this places women and girls at the core of the socioeconomic effects/impact of the pandemic

The economic impact of Covid-19 has created increased pressure and strain on the home front which has caused a higher frequency and critical domestic and intimate partner violence

There has been very narrowed/restricted prevention means and access to humanitarian response services which tackle gender-based and domestic violence during the lockdown (CARE Nigeria, UN Women in Nigeria, OXFAM in Nigeria, Rapid Gender Analysis, Northeast Region, Nigeria, 2020).

Women in Northern Nigerian are the most vulnerable population and are compared to an “an endangered species” striving so hard to survive. This part of Nigeria is sadly infamous for mostly negatives such as poverty, illiteracy, insecurity, unemployment and recently abuse of health and reproductive rights of women which includes female genital mutilation, child marriage and a consistent lack of access to healthcare and its facilities (Ogbe, 2020).

2.1.4 Healthcare Issues in Northern Nigeria

Women in Northern Nigerian are the most vulnerable population and are compared to an “an endangered species” striving so hard to survive. This part of Nigeria is sadly infamous for mostly negatives such as poverty, illiteracy,

insecurity, unemployment and recently abuse of health and reproductive rights of women which includes female genital mutilation, child marriage and a consistent lack of access to healthcare and its facilities (Ogbe, 2020).

Due to the extremely poor demand and utilization of women's healthcare services in northern Nigeria, this part of Nigeria ranks among the poorest in the world, regarding health indicators. In as much as there is considerable improvement in the northern society at large, the problem of women lacking formal education and being married off in their early teens creates a hinderance to social and economic emancipation. This puts their spouses in total control of decision making in the family and this includes seeking health care services. Northern Nigeria has some of the highest rates of maternal mortality worldwide. This can be partly due to women forgoing prenatal and postnatal care, as well as their decision to deliver their kids at home, usually unassisted. In many cases because they felt it was preferable. There was a consensus in focus groups that mothers should be able to give birth at home without assistance.

In three rural areas in northern Nigeria, pregnant women responded to maternal problems outside of a hospital setting, according to a 2010 study. They spoke with 322 new mothers, 15% of whom experienced at least one problem.

20% of them did nothing while they awaited their husbands to return and grant them consent to seek assistance (on average two hours later); 35% ingested or used natural therapies, only visiting the hospital when they failed (Irit Sinai et al., 2017).

Prior to the pandemic, Universal Health Coverage had set a global goal which was aimed at being attained by 2030. These goals were the emphasis place by the WHO on the significance of women-centered care for mothers with a recommended standard set for the health facilities for mothers and their newborns. A study by Mobolanle et al shows that during the pandemic, one-third of women could not access essential reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child healthcare (RMNCH) services in Lagos, A state in the Southwest of Nigeria which is far ahead of the Northeastern region in terms advancement, technology, and formal education. Furthermore, the study states that the lockdown and travel ban placed by several states in the country amidst the pandemic was largely responsible for the lack of access to health services and facilities.

Nigeria reported its index case of COVID-19 on February 27, 2020; incidentally, the first in Nigeria and West Africa according to the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control. Subsequently, a lockdown or curfew in various states was

implemented to contain the fast spread of the virus. All citizens except those on essential duties were expected to stay at home and maintain good handwashing hygiene practices, local and international travels were restricted, businesses, offices, public gatherings (including religious places), schools and universities were closed, and public and private sports cancelled (NCDC, 2020). While many other countries have switched to virtual learning, many tertiary institutions within Nigeria lack the various online educational platforms or facilities for such method of teaching (Eze et al., 2018).

2.1.5 Covid-19

As Nigeria struggles to contain the spread of COVID-19, the need for personal hygiene, social distancing, regular hand washing, avoidance of large gatherings and other preventive/precautionary measures cannot be over-emphasized. By not letting out our guard now, we can save ourselves and others from contracting the virus and as well contain its spread among human beings. More than never, the government at various levels and media houses must intensify public enlightenment to clarify the misconceptions that many still have about the Novel Coronavirus. Most importantly, vaccines should be made available at health

centres to minimize the severity of this disease and reduce the number of casualties.

2.1.5.1 Covid-19 in Northern Nigeria

Prior to Covid-19, northern Nigeria has faced several challenges, ranging from gender inequality and gender-based violence to security challenges such as terrorist attacks and banditry as with many developing countries. The emergence of the pandemic has caused these situations to exacerbate. Banditry, which often involves rape, market raids, kidnapping, cattle rustling, and armed robbery with either arms or locally produced weapons used to threaten or kill victims has been on the increase since the lockdown (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019) In view of these, one can arguably say that northern Nigeria has been saddled with 2 pandemics (covid-19 and insecurity). While observing the social distancing guidelines has been one of the safest ways to contain and avoid the rapid spread of the Covid-19 virus, it is however very difficult to achieve in northern Nigeria due to many victims of the insurgency fleeing from their homes and seeking safety in IDP camps where hygienic conditions are hardly met due to overcrowding, exposing inhabitants to risks of easy contamination of the virus as refugees swarm the camps from Covid-

19 infested areas. The year 2019 alone saw about 180,000 people leaving their homes due to heightened cases of insurgency (Wada et al., 2022).

The impact of the situations mentioned above are mostly felt by women and girls who are usually the most vulnerable and are major care givers both within and beyond the home front, especially during pandemics and epidemics.

2.1.6 Impact of Coronavirus Disease on Reproductive Health

Measures seeking to prevent and control the spread of the Covid-19 disease have become more of a source of worry than solution in addition to the concerns created by the virus. The isolation conditions upon infection, constant use of disinfectant and medications used for treatment as well as the psychological trauma caused are all factors that affect reproductive health without a doubt. No damage to the female Covid-19 patients' reproductive system has been reported till date but when pre-existing health conditions are present in expectant mothers infected with this disease, neither mother nor child are sure to survive its vicious attack. Also, based on previous studies, it is still possible to suggest ways in which SARS-CoV-2 might attack ovarian tissue and reduce ovarian function and

oocyte quality causing infertility or miscarriage which translates to affecting female fertility or miscarriage (Li et al., 2020).

2.1.7 Response to Previous Pandemics (Ebola)

The direct impact of a disease is brought to light by the mortality as well as the morbidity associated with such disease, so also a decline in productivity brought on by the disease as with the case of the Coronavirus Disease and several diseases before it (Mers, HIV-AIDS, Sars-Cov1, Zika, and Ebola). While the Ebola outbreak started in December, 2013 in Guinea, it has rapidly spread across other West African Countries such as Mali, Liberia, Senegal, and Nigeria. There was a significant lack of information about the transmission of this disease and its case management in Nigeria and due to the heavy reliance on social media for information, there was a wide circulation of false news, misinformation, and myths about this disease, most of which were the drinking of and bathing with salt water to prevent transmission. After the outbreak of this disease in Nigeria, the Federal Government took stringent measures to ensure that those rumours were debunked but, the fear of the disease induced an aversion behaviour in general (Cahigas et al., 2022).

Women constituted 55% of Ebola cases in Nigeria and 56% of contacts traced. There were 20 confirmed cases nationwide during the outbreak and 11 of the 20 were women. 4 out of the 8 deaths reported were women and 3 of them were healthcare workers. This goes to show that women were more exposed and at risk due to their duties as care givers, both at home and in health centres as they are seen as responsible for nursing and caring for the sick. Again, this portrays the fact that women are more vulnerable to diseases because they tend to have direct or closer contact with the afflicted (Fawole et al., 2016).

2.2 Impact of Covid-19 on Gender Inequality

For this research, I studied the impact of covid-19 and specifically, how labor markets, political participation, education, and cultural and familial relations contribute to gender-based violence in the lives of women and girls in northern Nigeria which has been on the rise, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown.

2.2.1 Labor Markets

A question of interest with regards to global labor markets is how poverty and vulnerability, especially in relation to women, are interwoven. The link between these two factors has caused economic insecurity to exacerbate in countries where it is seen that women represent a greater portion of informal markets and labor, especially with biased or no labor/work contracts, the eventuality of insecurity and high level of competition is inevitable (Beneria et al., 2015).

In the case of Nigeria, research have shown that over 80% of women in the labor force, work in the informal sector, with minimal, limited, or no social protection. When compared to the Ebola Pandemic, it reveals that an endangered livelihood, often, causes/pushes women to engage in extremely risky and fatalistic survival techniques which includes but is not limited to transactional sex. This without a doubt leads to sexual violence, unplanned conception, and STDs (Young, 2020).

It is common knowledge that the labor market is the major medium through which families survive and grow. Owing to that, having a fair

comprehension of the labor market is essential for fighting poverty in any community. Nigeria is not very different in that regard, as the government aims to end poverty in the lives of over 100 million Nigerians by the year 2030, even though about 4 in 10 people live below the national poverty line before the pandemic.

Covid-19 has not only affected the health of people around the world but has equally impacted negatively on the social lives and economic development of almost all countries the world over, making Nigeria no different. Data drawn from Nigeria COVID-19 National Longitudinal Phone Survey (NLPS) shows that employment rate in households realized a drastic fall since the beginning of Covid-19 pandemic (from 86% to 42% between march 2020 and April/May 2020). The leading cause of this could be attributed to the strict lockdown enforced in many states across the country which limited people from going to their various workplaces and businesses. By august 2020, most Nigerians had returned to work. A survey taken again amongst working age household members showed that by February 2021, they had because fully reengaged with work but mostly in small scale businesses, concentrating mainly on buying and selling (commerce), (*LAIN & VISHWANATH, 2021*).

With regards to agriculture, a good number of supply firms described the demand of their products after planting season to have considerably diminished and they witness a greater decline with the movement restrictions, more so, the challenge of transporting products from one place to the other increased at this time.

In addition to this, most financial institutions became reluctant in giving loans and agricultural credit because they witness an increase in the cases of default. A microfinance bank in Yobe state reported to have witnessed a 3% rise in defaults as against no default in repayment since 2019. Many financial institutions had to downsize their staff while the policies laid by the Central Bank of Nigeria on Covid-19 caused many banks to be unable to service loans or even assess loan applications. Amidst these challenges, the lockdown also hindered bank officials from accessing debtors or even verifying their collateral. These challenges put together caused a big constraint on banks playing their role in enabling agricultural institutions to keep up with their usual activities. Also, in northeastern Nigeria, a shortage in staple products was reported. 42% of agricultural produce such as tubers (yam, cassava, potatoes) grains and cereals were unavailable although these were previously highly obtainable (Corps, 2020).

Taking a closer look at how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected women's career and livelihood, it would be agreed that in as much as the pandemic has affected every gender negatively, women's livelihoods are more affected considering the immense inequality they have been faced with. As with most cases around the world, men and women's jobs differ thus making women's job seem less important than men's jobs. Considering this, it is easier to lay women off their jobs, while men attend to 'more important tasks. Nigeria is no different because one can see that teaching jobs for instance are mainly occupied by women. As a result of this, the closure of schools during the lockdown saw women staying at home with less to do and a halt in income.

With the coming of the Covid-19 pandemic was a great economic decline with highlighted the wide disparity faced by women in the labor markets. A study has shown that women's jobs are 1.8 times more vulnerable than men's jobs during the pandemic. While women take up a whopping 39% of global employment, they represent 54% of overall job losses and one of the factors majorly responsible for this is the level of burdened unpaid care work shouldered by women in addition to their other jobs and daily domestic responsibilities. It is without a doubt that if these issues are addressed, there would be an increase in

economic and social outcomes across the globe and this would lead to improved economic growth.

It is important to note that most of the industries/sectors that expected a considerable decline in the year 2020 due to the pandemic had women disproportionately represented making them more vulnerable to losing their jobs than men.

Another important reason for the vulnerability of women's labor force because of the pandemic is the fact that women account for a higher percentage of microenterprises (entrepreneurship) in developing countries and the lockdown forced many businesses to halt or eventually shutdown (Anu Madgavkar, 2020).

2.2.1.1 Increased Unpaid Work During the Lockdown

While the Covid-19 pandemic was seen to have negatively affected global labor markets and caused economic losses in several countries, its effect on the household can be seen to have created a wider gender disparity, especially with regards to unpaid work (house chores and care work). Although men were available in their homes due to the restriction of movements, women still bore the burden of domestic work which caused more stress and distress to them except in

non-traditional households where chores were shared according to the occupational demands of spouses during the lockdown.

However, the burden of domestic chores and unpaid care work did not change much in northern Nigeria because the women usually have no income generating jobs except meeting the domestic needs of their family, which became worse during the pandemic. It can be seen therefore, that availability of time on the part of the males does not guarantee the understanding of gendered patterns, rather, it is the existence of restructured social norms that gives room for such changes (Farré et al., 2022).

In recent times, men are more involved in family life than ever before, with many fathers—especially those with advanced degrees—working unpaid jobs. This primarily entails indirect care work, which includes non-routine domestic tasks like shopping, transportation, and home maintenance, whereas time spent on direct care work, such as childcare, is still insufficient on the whole (Kan et al., 2011)

Covid-19 has created a clearer picture as to the importance of unpaid care work which is carried out by women both on the frontlines, in performing their duties as healthcare workers or as care givers in their various families. It has

created a platform for reconstructing societal norms, reinforcing the need for a systemic change, while offering a chance to improve the world (Dugarova, 2020).

On the plus side, many males are more exposed to the dual load of paid and unpaid labor because of mass facility closures and the transition to flexible work arrangements (particularly in white collar jobs). This might result in fathers doing more unpaid labor, which might help to undermine social norms and bring about a more equal sharing of care and household duties (De Paz et al., 2020).

2.2.2 Education

Female education in Nigeria is fast becoming a means to rebuilding and redefining women, especially as Nigeria tries to catch up with the rest of the world in issues relating to gender disparity. Many of such women and girls are mostly from the southern, western, and eastern regions of Nigeria, with only 20% of females in the northern region attending schools and being literate. Despite efforts to ensure that women receive formal education, it seems like a far-fetched task, especially with northern females, who are mostly married off before the age of eighteen. A lot of the time, these girls must drop out of school and the unmarried ones take to street hawking to sustain their families (Alabi & Alabi, 2014).

It has been reported that over 1.5 million in about 188 countries across the globe have been affected by the covid-19 lockdown which has led to closure of schools and higher institutions, serving as a preventive measure to arrest the spread of the virus. Due to the lockdown, a lot of schools have resorted to virtual learning which is considered as the best alternative to physical learning owing to its limit to close and physical contact. In as much as this was seen as the best solution at the time, it took a toll on the well-being of teachers, as well as students, not to mention the challenges related to constant connection to the internet, especially in developing countries where steady power supply is still a struggle. Several studies have tried to access the determinants for the seamless use of integrated technology to create a conducive interface for teachers and students in the face of emerging technological advancement. This same method has been used to measure the quality of education offered online. It is necessary to analyze this type of exchange both on the part of the teacher and learners. If either is challenged with the ability to adapt this change, new methodologies may not yield much productivity (Hyseni Duraku, 2021).

With the nationwide closure of schools due to the Covid-19 pandemic, unprecedented situations gave rise to gender-based violence and child abuse such as child marriages and teenage pregnancies. It is estimated that 18 million female

learners in Nigeria have experienced interruption in their education due to school closure. This is where the gender imbalance comes to play, with boy child education placed above that of the girl, the latter is almost always forced to give up her education because the boy is seen as ‘more important’, especially in situations where the family is financially incapacitated.

Early and forced marriage is widespread in Nigeria, especially in the northern region and it is not surprising that an alarming 44% of Nigerian girls are married before they attain the age of 18 and 16% before the age of 15 with Nigeria ranking 3rd in the world for countries with the highest figures of child brides/marriages; this without a doubt contributes to countless cases of unreported acts of sexual and domestic violence faced by women who were once child brides (*Young, 2020*).

The covid-19 pandemic had a great impact on higher education (universities) in Nigeria. Universities were closed from march to October 2020. While private universities had a swift transition from face-to-face to online learning, many federal and state universities had difficulties moving physical classes online due to the challenge of a lack of information on how to utilize distance learning tools which were finally taught to both students and lecturers online, unlimited access to the internet and uninterrupted power supply to mention

a few, even though school administration in a number of schools helped in providing guidance and assistance while ensuring that learning continued uninterrupted and students were evaluated online (*Ebohon et al., 2021*).

With the E-learning system, there was a wide gap in learning due to the lack of expertise and employment of ICT workers and the enormous rates one had to pay for internet access. More so, most of the learning platforms had to be paid for and the entire learning process was not very effective, except for students whose parents/guardians could afford to pay for them to attend private schools and equally pay for unlimited internet services. Also, due to the archaic system of data collection, documentation of online paperless files proved difficult, especially for most educationist from public schools in Nigeria, who were not ICT savvy. This caused many public/governments owned schools lag behind in the academic session during the Covid-19 lockdown (*Samuel, 2020*).

Taking a closer look at the impact of the Covid-19 on the education and wellbeing of girls in Africa, it would be of great positive impact if strategies and sound policies are made to encourage the involvement and participation of girls in school activities. Unfortunately, these are not obtainable even in a normal society in present day Africa, let alone making and implementing these said policies in

the time of the pandemic. It is indeed imperative that education lawmakers focus a great deal on introducing interventions that would bridge the gender gap and reduce risks and vulnerabilities that have prevailed largely before the pandemic. A few of several risks in Nigeria include the Boko Haram insurgency, CRV (crisis related violence) which has already created fear in the lives of women and girls, causing them to be reluctant to attend schools even before the pandemic. These situations, which vary from country to country, have worsened with the lockdown. It would be equally challenging, especially for young girls who have been forced into child and/or early marriage to focus on attending online schools while being faced with domestic violence and mental health issues. The lockdown witnessed an increased number of child and teenage pregnancies following sexual abuse and gender-based violence and this has greatly affected the wellbeing of these girls and young women, decreasing their zeal for formal learning, especially where the use of learning technologies is required.

In setting up Covid-19 response and recovery programs and strategies, monitoring systems and legal mitigation strategies should be emphasized while devising mechanisms to help victims to cope with such experiences. Deliberate actions must be taken to prevent future exposure and risk of young adolescents from falling victims of domestic violence and exclusion from access and return to school after the Covid-19 lockdown (Ebohon et al., 2021).

The Nigerian education system being completely unprepared for the pandemic, saw more than 80% of students staying at home due to the lockdown. Much worse is the Northern western region of Nigeria, where over 96% of women cannot read. While in the Southeastern part, poor women are mostly affected and women are generally seen as second-class citizens, unfortunately, only 1% is rich. Nigerian girls are almost always at the receiving end and victims of a system which has done a great disservice to them mostly due to cultural and traditional barriers, archaic as it may sound. Biased gender roles are passed down through generations, causing girls to be marginalized. While gender related policies assume dormant positions, the needs and rights of females face great suppression.

2.2.3 Political Participation

There have been a good number of feminist theories of women's participation in electoral politics which are mostly drawn from sociological theories. One of many theories which is quite captivating, especially to the African as well as Nigerian societal structure is that of Akhona Nkenkana. According to this idea, the "coloniality of gender," which encompasses women's ongoing marginalization in politics and society, explains why men dominate women in politics, where she

gave examples related to the contemporary, cultural, and historical situation. She further emphasized that the mindset is responsible for the perceptions created about women participating in politics and until it changes, every challenge faced by women concerning politics will remain the same.

In as much as Nigeria's constitution as well as its electoral body (Independent National electoral Commission allows for active political participation by women, only a few have engaged fully in it. Their exclusion can be said to be because of the deep set patriarchal political system which perceives the "masculinist" viewpoint as the basis for the society's vision of politics which undoubtedly habitually goes in the favor of men. Owing to this, men are treated better in the public sphere while women are almost always treated as though they are at their best when at home (Ette & Akpan-Obong, 2022).

Considering the large population in Nigeria, it would be expected that there would be a higher number with regards to the political participation of women in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the reverse is the case. Owing to the socio-cultural and religious restrictions placed on women, it is usually very challenging for them to participate in politics.

People's mindset in northern Nigeria aligns with religious interpretations that confine women's roles to household duties as well as other public leadership

representation on issues affecting women and children. Public positions contested by women are hardly won and usually, the results are overturned to favor the male contestant as was the case of Hajiya Naja'atu Muhammad, who contested for Kano state Central Senatorial position but lost to the late Alhaji Kura Muhammad.

This case is interesting since it is a legitimate example that reflects the patriarchal structure of northern Nigeria's political process. It also demonstrates how officials from government offices influence women by using religion and culture. In the same light, while there have been a few success stories from women in politics in northern Nigeria, it is a major source of concern that many women have faced public lynching, blackmail, and even serious backlash by the media space in Nigeria, publishing sexual clips and compromising photographs to tarnish and/or even destroy their political ambition and career.

Data drawn from an anonymous interview revealed that a former female minister who served in the Nigerian government was blackmailed into giving up her quest to run for the 2015 senatorial elections. Many popular Nigerian celebrities are victims of social lynching, and this has created a dent in their image in the society as well as prevented them from participating in politics (Suleiman et al., 2021).

One of the hinderances to women participating in politics is the fact that it is time consuming and very demanding. Party members must attend campaign functions, fundraising events, primaries, member meetings and the likes and this causes a lot of conflict for women whose spouses or partners are not reassuring and considerate because most meetings are held in the evening. It is indeed tedious for a woman, especially in northern Nigeria, to run a home and engage in politics full time. Most times, the heavy price paid by women in politics is the peace in the marital lives (Olufade, 2013).

Research was carried out to reveal the impact of Covid-19 restrictions in France and it showed that the lockdown had a greater impact on areas with more restriction of movement which translated to low voter turnout (Giommoni & Loumeau, 2020).

This situation is no different in Nigeria, especially where women are involved. In addition to the lockdown, women were saddled with a lot of responsibility which made going out of the house an impossible task altogether, whereas the men could go to the polling units to vote when the restriction of movement was more relaxed. This portrays the inequality between men and women, as seen by the society. A woman is viewed as a second-class citizen,

whose vote does not amount to anything, rather, she is seen as relevant when she can multitask domestic chores and care work.

Given that the Independent National Electoral Commission went ahead to conduct elections already scheduled during the Covid-19 lockdown, without giving room for postponement, it is not surprising that women who were saddled with domestic responsibilities could neither come out to vote nor campaign to be elected (Sani, 2021).

2.2.4 Cultural and Familial Relations

While culture and tradition bind a people to their history, roots, and lineage, giving a general sense of belonging and acceptance, one cannot take away the fact that it equally binds people to certain practices and norms which are neither beneficial nor progressive and which are sometimes harmful to its people. Also, certain families uphold certain values even when it does not serve them positively and any family member who goes against this would risk being ostracized, disowned, or even tortured and killed to maintain “family honor”.

African and Nigerian women have experienced and are still experiencing various forms of abuse, torture, torment, and brutality which neither westernization nor civilization has been able to curb, all in the name of culture. Lack of recognition for women as well as objectification is borne of many cultures in Africa, men view women as lesser beings and regularly invalidate their struggles and challenges, labelling them weak. So also, is domestic and care work in the home; seen only as a chore for women and almost a taboo for a man to engage in, his only duty is to provide for the family while the woman bears the burden of cooking, cleaning, raising children, and in some cases, farming and harvesting. So many cultures in Nigeria set certain clauses and impose man-made abhorrent laws with regards to women, to exert some level of control on their lives. An example of such, is the Ikwerre tribe in Rivers state, Nigeria, where the female child has no right to inherit her father's wealth once she is married. Another is the Tiv Culture in Benue state, where the wife is offered as an "entertainment" to male visitors who have visited from a distance. In the Igbo culture, the wife of a deceased man is inherited by the dead man's brother. This shows how much value is placed on women and girls from centuries gone, treating them as mere tools or objects (*Arisi & Oromareghake, 2011*).

The advent of the Covid-19 pandemic and the restriction of movement has caused some negative cultural practices to become even more pronounced, especially against women who in most instances, have nowhere to run to for help. This is a common occurrence globally, and Nigeria is not exempted. Cultural practices that encourage domestic/gender-based violence, marital rape leading to unplanned pregnancies, emotional abuse, as well as male dominance were reported to have been on the increase during the lockdown. These cultural practices which have proven harmful to the lives of women and girls are seen by the society as trivial and private, and women who report such incidents are rarely taken seriously. Unfortunately, spouses and partners were forced to share the same space for prolonged periods which caused more aggression, frustration, and tension between them. Victims of domestic violence who needed urgent medical attention and counseling could hardly access health care facilities and counseling centers and had to nurse sustained injuries in their homes (Arisukwu et al., 2021).

Chapter 3. Methodology

In this chapter, the procedure through which this research was carried out shall be demonstrated, as also, as the data collection process, research model, and the geographical location of the study. To aid in achieving the research objectives, as well as answering the research question, a qualitative study approach was used to assess the impact of the covid-19 lockdown on domestic violence experienced by women and girls in Nigeria. Primary and secondary data were collected through recorded interviews and the use of documented data from newspapers, NGOs, blogs, and the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS).

The use of the qualitative study approach is to obtain detailed and exhaustive information on the past and current situation in Nigeria with regard to domestic violence (gender-based). Some of the advantages of qualitative research include being able to comprehend the attitudes and behaviors of people faced with certain situations (Rahman, 2016).

3.1 Research Design

This research was carried out in northern Nigeria, west Africa. The choice of this geographical location is mainly because Nigeria, known as the “giant of Africa” is one of the prominent pacesetters for Africa and many countries across the globe. It is the most populous country in Africa, as well as the African country with the largest economy in the world. Despite its position amongst countries worldwide, Nigeria is also one of the most insecure countries in the world, with crime at its highest peak. The main region commonly affected by insecurity is the northern region where Boko haram, banditry, and violence against women take place. These challenges and further complicated by illiteracy and hunger, unemployment, and poor rural infrastructure to name a few (Akinsowon, 2021).

3.2 Data Collection

To achieve the objectives of this study, mainly women of reproductive ages between 15-49 years of age were selected. Respondents were selected with the help of NGO staff who had visited and worked within those communities. Using the interview method, 13 women were interviewed from the Northern region (northeast, northwest, and northcentral) of Nigeria by the NGO staff who was paid

to serve as an interviewer, using the interview guides. Most of the interviews were conducted in the local dialect which is also my native language (Hausa). The interview explored gender-based violence pre and post-Covid-19 lockdown in Nigeria, focusing on women and adolescent girls in this region. The interviews were conducted within 3 weeks and the interview duration lasted between 15 and 30 minutes, depending on each respondent. After conducting interviews, we manually transcribed data collected from Hausa to the English language in readiness for use.

Participants of this interview were informed that it would be recorded and later transcribed for use in this research, also, most questions were open-ended. They were also assured of anonymity. Women interviewed were from different socio-economic backgrounds, and had distinct levels of education, although most women from the core north hardly have any formal education and are mostly stay-at-home spouses, which makes them largely dependent on their spouses.

Secondary data such as newspapers and archival research were used. Also, datasets from the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) were used to evaluate some indicators for women and adolescent girls. The NDHS is a national representative survey that provides coverage data at the population level

on key health indicators including reproductive health, fertility, maternal and child health, adult and childhood mortality, breastfeeding practices, nutritional status of women and children, women empowerment, domestic violence, female genital cutting, the prevalence of malaria, and other health-related issues such as smoking.

3.3 Study Area

Nigeria is in the western part of Africa. Nigeria is a federal republic comprising 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja with a total area of 923,769 km². 19 states out of the 36 states are in northern Nigeria. It is the most populous country in Africa and the seventh most populous country in the world with an estimated population of over 200 million inhabitants and an annual growth rate of 2.6% (The World Bank, 2020).

The study was conducted in the Northern region. Northern Nigeria consists of three geopolitical zones namely, northeast, northwest, and north-central. There are approximately 100 minority ethnic groups with the widely spoken languages being Fulani and Hausa.

Some of the most common factors which contribute to the north lagging in the economic advancement and empowerment of women include but are not limited to, illiteracy, poor reproductive and childcare for women, poverty, culture,

and tradition and religion. Northern Nigeria has the highest number of child beggars and street hawkers and for that reason, there are many cases of sexual violence and abuse, especially related to pedophilia. 84.4% of reported cases of sexual abuse were in children who were less than 16 years of age (Adewole et al., 2021).

3.4 Trustworthiness of Research

Trustworthiness, as defined by the Oxford dictionary, is the ability to be relied on as honest and truthful. Trustworthiness of research measures how reliable or believable the data used, interpretations, and methodology is to ascertain the standard of work done. The credibility of research or the reliance on the truthfulness of a study and its findings is, therefore, part of the most important points of reference (Polit et al., 2014).

During my study, I ensured that all information received and used was to the best of my knowledge, truthful and honest. I examined the voice recordings of the interviews over again and made sure all responses transcribed were not from a biased or personalized viewpoint. I maintained objectivity with regard to the use of my data. Interviews were done without coercion or persuasion. Respondent's responses were independent of preconceived notions or beliefs.

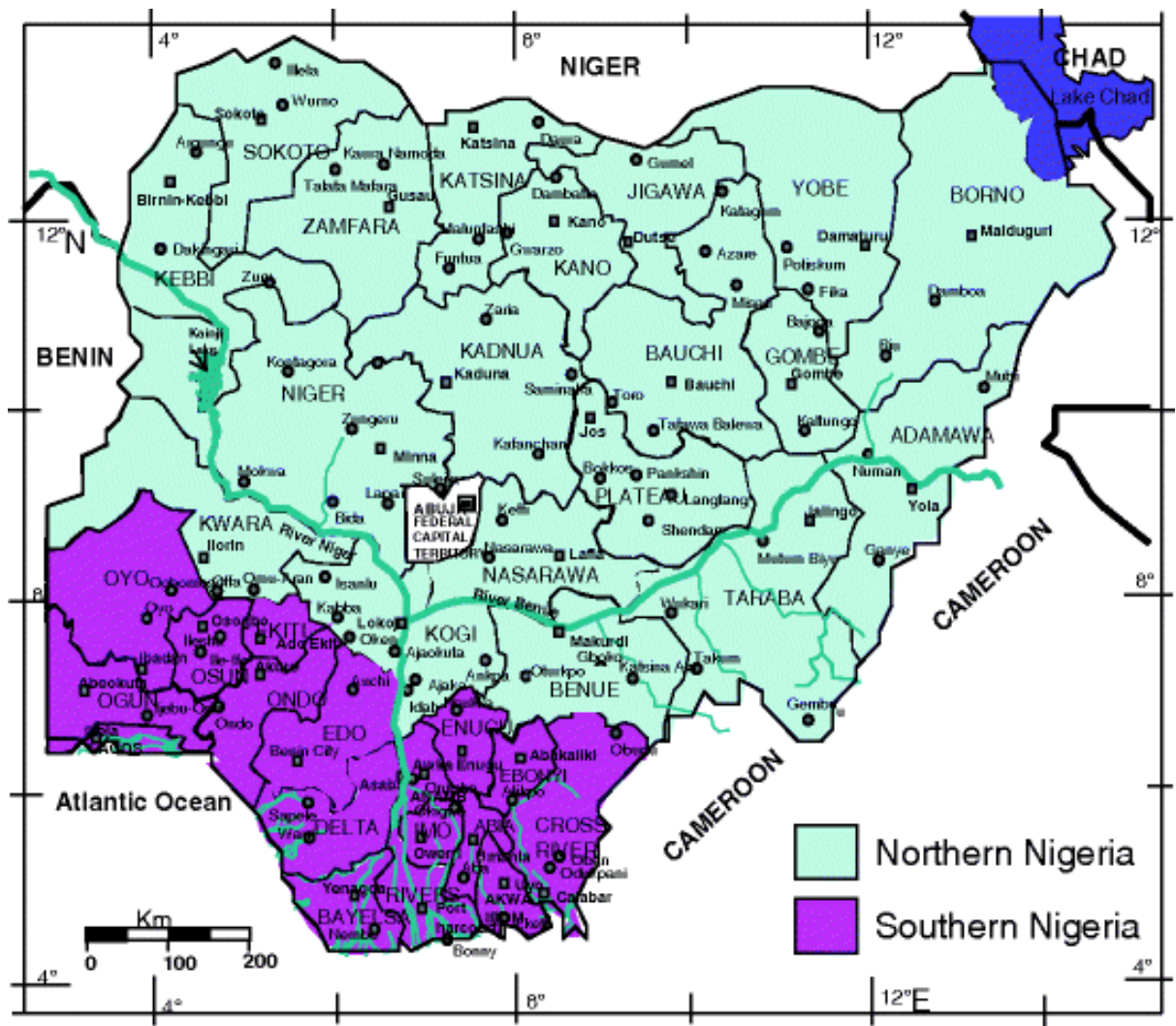


Figure 1. Map of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Source: Google, Map of Nigeria showing the regions

3.5 Data Analysis

“You have just completed recording and typing field notes from your observations and interviews for your research, and you proceed to file them. There, staring at you is all the material/data you have carefully collected, yet an empty feeling envelopes you; ‘what do I do with all this information?’”

The collection, organization, and use of data in a relevant manner is referred to as data analysis. Through a carefully thought analytical process, a researcher can turn a rather large and bulky piece of information into an easy-to-understand and intuitive piece of work.

The thematic method of data analysis was used as it is known to be a method for identifying ‘patterns’ and ‘themes’ regarding data collected. The two main steps taken in this method were as follows:

- i. We familiarized ourselves with collected data which translates to transcribing data ourselves. This ensured easy understanding and easy expression of ideas.
- ii. Initial codes were generated while searching for themes and gathering themes to create possible codes. The themes later gathered should correlate with the initial codes extracted across the data set analysis (Liamputtong, 2009).

Following the collection of the data, we listened again and manually transcribed all the interviews as they were mostly conducted in my native dialect (Hausa).

3.6 Basis for the Selection of Respondents

In carrying out standardized research, the use of a practical plan ensures that generalization does not occur, which is the core behind sample and sample size selection. Where insufficient participants are utilized, results are bound to be one-sided, limited, or less liable to be generalized (Sarfo et al., 2021). In using the in-depth interview method, women were chosen, who met the benchmark below:

- i. Must be female between the ages of 15-49 years of age
- ii. Must have lived with a spouse or an intimate partner
- iii. Must be from the northern region of Nigeria
- iv. Must reside in northern Nigeria
- v. Must have had an experience with domestic violence
- vi. Must be fluent in either English or Hausa language
- vii. Must give consent to be interviewed

Table 1. Respondents' Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics

S/N	Name	Age	Age of spouse	Marital status	Education level	Occupation
1	Bintu	22	33	married	Nil	Housewife
2	Aisha	27	45	married	Nil	Petty trader
3	Zara	27	35	married	Nil	Petty trader
4	Nana	25	35	married	Nil	Nil
5	Hajir	20	35	Married	Nil	Nil
6	Lara	25	35	Married	Nil	Nil
7	Sara	35	36	Married	Bachelors' degree	entrepreneur
8	Kyauta	34	50	Married	Nil	Petty trader
9	Daisy	20	35	Married	Nil	Nil
10	Amina	25	50	Married	High school	Nil
11	Auta	28	55	Married	High school	Petty trader
13	Yumna	32	52	Divorced	Higher National Diploma	School teacher

Note: all names used are pseudonyms to ensure the anonymity of participants

Chapter 4. Research findings

This chapter encapsulates the study analysis and findings as it relates to gender inequality. It equally elaborates on the encounters of northern women regarding domestic/gender-based violence, especially during the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020.

To answer my research questions, 13 women were involved in the interview session which was carried out with the help of a hired interviewer due to the time difference and geographical location of the participants and myself, with full consent to use the data collected for research purpose as mentioned in the earlier chapter. The results/findings, summary as well as demographics of these interviews are elaborated on in this chapter.

All participants are from northern Nigeria, married, and to ensure the quality of data, mostly women who have been identified as victims of abuse in any way, shape, or form were interviewed.

The interview data were coded based on patterns and themes drawn from the beacon research which were education, cultural and Familial relations, political participation, and labor market.

During the data analysis, the following themes were extracted; illiteracy, cultural stereotypes (cultural and familial relations), religious and traditional prejudice, financial insecurity/dependence, intimidation, indoctrination, suppression, shame, food insecurity, unpaid care/housework gender bias and inequality which were sub-divided into; child/early marriage, forced/arranged marriage, and marriage as trade, and education which was equally sub-divided into; risk of sexual abuse, increased child labor, and increased burden of domestic chores for girls, illiteracy, and unequal accessibility to learning.

4.1 Findings and Analysis

While examining the interviews, it showed that Covid-19 did not only bring to light the situation of gender-based violence in northern Nigeria, but it also showed how the pandemic exacerbated this situation that northern women and girls have and are still experiencing in silence. One of the key reasons is that the lockdown did not give women the opportunity to seek help in curbing this situation, also, women are seen as lesser members of the community and with little or no formal education, they are not aware of their human rights according to the constitution of Nigeria.

In addition to that, humanitarian services were very limited, courts were also closed during the lockdown, making it difficult for abused women to make reports to the right authorities. Financial frustration resulting from reduced or total lack of income during the lockdown caused a lot of aggression on the part of the men. Also, the burden of domestic and unpaid work increased drastically for women during the Covid-19 lockdown causing difficulties for women who worked from home. The restriction of movement because of the lockdown made women who had some petty trades, businesses, and who were gainfully employed to be unable to generate income and cater to their needs and that of their children, which made them become solely dependent on their spouses, as a result, responsibilities increased for men causing more aggression and tension in the home which led to bouts of domestic violence. Young girls could not consistently engage in E-learning organized by some elementary and high schools due to the burden of domestic work.

While the idea of male child preference has been in existence in many parts of the world, for centuries before now, one cannot take away the fact that it has caused females to suffer a lot of humiliation and brutalization. This archaic belief has also caused women to be seen as the “property” of men. It is further

reinforced by cultural and religious ideologies which have shaped the behaviors, principles, values, and perceptions of people (Raji et al., 2016).

Some typical behaviors and practices in Africa as well as northern Nigeria dictate that a woman remains silent in the presence of her spouse, she should only speak when she is spoken to, and she must internalize brutality, violence, infidelity, and even oppression, accepting it as a norm. Many women stay with their spouses/partners to avoid being blamed for a failed marriage because the general opinion is that a woman is responsible for keeping her home in order while the man has no blame.

Also, certain socio-cultural behaviors/beliefs and practices largely contribute to the trends in many homes across the globe, Nigeria being no different. Many cultures normalize infidelity on the part of the man and other negative practices such as domestic violence, emotional and mental abuse, and overburdened housework (Alordiah et al., 2022).

To address the research question, which was “What are the determining factors that brought about an increase in gender-based violence in northern Nigeria during the Covid-19 lockdown?”, findings indicated that several themes

and patterns identified in this research played a role in heightened conflicts between spouses.

Table 2. Thematic classification

Education	(Result of lockdown on education) Risk of sexual abuse, increased child labor, increased burden of domestic chores, inability to adhere to covid-19 safety guidelines
Political Participation	Unequal accessibility and/or rights to vote (not applicable in northern Nigeria because there were no elections in that region during the Covid-19 lockdown)
Cultural/Familial Relations	Religious and traditional prejudice (conservatism and ignorance, harmful traditional practices), cultural stereotypes, shame (stigmatization of victims), female suppression (fear, internalization of abuse), indoctrination, intimidation, victimization of women and girls (child/early marriage, arranged/forced marriage, marriage as trade)
Labour Markets	Unpaid care/housework (laundry, cooking and cleaning, childcare), financial/economic insecurity (crashing of petty trades, retrenchment, inability of spouse to meet complete needs of the family)

The table above classifies the extracted themes that are associated with labor markets, political participation, education, and cultural and familial relations used to assess the impact of the covid-19 pandemic and the gender-based violence during the lockdown which followed the emergence of the pandemic. These themes give a clearer view on the experiences of women and girls during the pandemic lockdown. It equally shows the role they played in heightening cases of gender-based violence in northern Nigeria, creating conflicts and magnifying the tension and uneasiness that came with sharing a space an abusive spouse/partner as elaborated below.

4.2 The Shadow of Labour Market Lockdown

4.2.1 Unpaid Care/Housework

It was interesting to discover during the interviews that all respondents complained about increased house chores during the lockdown. It would be assumed that men would assist during this period due to the stay-at-home initiative, rather, as explained in earlier parts of this research, the availability of time on the part of the males does not guarantee the understanding of gendered patterns, which translates to care/domestic work, rather, it is the existence of restructured social norms that gives room for such changes. Although men were

available in their homes due to the restriction of movements, women still bore the burden of domestic work which caused more stress and distress to women except in non-traditional households where chores were shared according to the occupational demands of spouses during the lockdown (Farré et al., 2022).

Several respondents pointed out the sharp increase in:

4.2.1.1 Laundry

Due to the lockdown, children were always at home, mostly playing in their compounds or with the neighbors' children, where communal living applied. Several respondents complained about having more laundry because of the constant presence of the children and this is majorly because the closure of schools due to the pandemic had children staying at home during the lockdown.

4.2.1.2 Cooking and cleaning

The frequency of cooking, cleaning dishes, and serving spouses and children was at an all-time high because of the lockdown, the time spent in school by the children or at work by husbands was now spent at home which created

more needs to be tended to and that translated to more domestic responsibilities for women at home.

4.2.1.3 Childcare

Because of the above-stated reasons and facts, women became more of nannies and had to watch over their children, especially the younger ones and with divided attention because other chores equally called for their attention.

Following the interviews, the excerpts below captured what they had to say about changes in routine and increased housework during the lockdown:

“I had more work to do, the domestic chores were overwhelming, I had to cook a lot more because he was always at home and the kids were out of school” (Auta, 28, interviewed September 2022).

Another respondent added:

“Yes, it has changed a lot, during the pandemic, I did a lot of house chores. I had to cater to my husband and 2 kids which made care work more demanding” (Sara, 35, interviewed September 2022).

Similarly, another respondent said:

“I did more cooking, cleaning, and laundry” (Kyauta, 34, interviewed September 2022).

In another narration, this respondent had this to say about unpaid work in her home:

“I cooked, cleaned, did laundry, and attended to my conjugal duties and it was not easy for me. These children eat like termites, and I could not catch a break, yet their father thinks I sit at home all day doing nothing” (Nina, 24, interviewed September 2022).

In addition to the above excerpts, this respondent narrated a similar experience:

“I had more chores and more beatings; I was traumatized because schools were closed, and I couldn’t take a break from the house. It seemed as if the chores never ended and I had a baby at the time, life was hard, I got divorced shortly after the lockdown” (Yumna, 32, interviewed September 2022).

Due to the constant pressure to meet up with responsibilities at home, few of the respondents who could work from home found it difficult to strike a balance between their domestic duties and their paid jobs, causing the latter to

suffer. Most working-class women have been recorded to have experienced these challenges during the lockdown.

Comparably, studies have shown that during the Covid-19 lockdown, there was a decline in employment in many countries around the world, causing a more noticeable gender disparity in paid and unpaid work. Women were given lesser work hours in paid work but experienced more hours of unpaid labor in their homes. Even though there was an inappreciable rise in men's contribution to domestic work, women still bore the greater brunt of it. More results from this research showed that less educated women engaged in more unpaid work during the lockdown while educated and gainfully employed women had to work from home and still attend to domestic and care work. Men on the other hand worked from home for the most part but contributed little or nothing to domestic work (Farré et al., 2022).

From this viewpoint and the above reports and studies, it is evident that culture and society mold gender behavior negatively; creating a general belief and mindset that domestic work is only befitting of women, reinforcing an old, prejudiced saying that "a woman's place is in the kitchen". This belief and

practice are on the extreme, mostly in rural areas where a lot of women do not know better due to illiteracy and ignorance.

To buttress this point, previous research has reiterated the rate of unpaid care work was at an all-time high during the Covid-19 lockdown. Undermining the severe repercussions of unpaid care work that restricts women, who are as numerous as men, if not more in Nigeria's population, would keep the value of women's contributions to the nation's economic production down. There is a need to propose a workable and practical solution to the problem which confirms the prevalence of unpaid care work among women in Nigeria as well as to ascertain the degree to which it affected them, particularly during the COVID-19 lockdown (Adebola & Ononokpono, 2022).

4.3 Financial/Economic Insecurity

The emergence of Covid-19 and subsequently, the lockdown which went on for many months saw many northern women in financial distress and total dependence on their spouses. These women faced:

4.3.1 Crashing of petty trades and business

Some of the women complained about having less clientele than they did before the lockdown, those who engaged in running small food businesses such as frying beancakes, tofu, yams, and cassava had to give up their trade and stay at home and this partly created some frustration on the part of their husbands.

4.3.2 Retrenchment by factories/companies/private organizations

Due to the limited generation of income, most privately owned organizations downscaled the size of their workers and/or even cut workers' salaries by a fraction. Most women who worked as cleaners were laid off from their jobs because of the restriction of movement.

4.3.3 Inability of spouses to meet the complete needs of their families

Many men had already gotten used to their wives meeting their own simple needs such as buying cosmetics and sanitary wear but due to the pandemic lockdown, women had to stay at home, most were laid off their jobs and businesses and had to attend to domestic chores which they eventually became overwhelmed by. This caused them to be completely dependent on their spouses who in turn felt burdened by numerous financial responsibilities.

“I experienced a lot of conflict during the pandemic. He doesn’t provide and he has a lot of mood swings which makes him beat me” (Kyauta, 34, September 2022).

Another respondent narrated:

“I experienced a lot of conflict with my husband because he could not provide much, so many times, the children and I have gone to bed hungry because he could not work during the lockdown, whenever I call his attention to it, he gets angry and frustrated and sometimes, he slaps me. I have no savings for myself because he would not permit me to earn a living since, we got married” (Amina, 25, interviewed September 2022).

As seen in most of the interviews, it can be inferred that most of the respondents are heavily dependent on their spouses, which can be because of cultural, traditional, or even religious subjugation. The quest for power and control by their partners and most northern men causes them to create an unhealthy need for absolute dependence on their partners. While with house/care work, the woman is left with the entirety of it, although the man stays at home during the lockdown for an equal amount of time as she does. This further strengthens my sentiments along the lines of Beneria Lourdes’ “feminization of poverty” and “the liberating effect” in the text “*Beneria, Lourdes_Berik,*

Günseli_Floro, Maria - Gender, development, and globalization economics as if all people mattered”(Kozieł, 2017).

In as much as these above-mentioned sections of the text interestingly elaborate on the positive and progressive impact of labor market opportunities as conceived by globalization, providing women with the freedom to earn higher wages, rather than seemingly engaging in the unpaid domestic/care work that has gained grounds in the lives of women for centuries on end, it does not, however, change the fact that men from northern Nigeria have indoctrinated their spouses into female suppression.

During the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, it was not uncommon to hear the use of words “the hunger pandemic” mainly due to the economic and financial impact it had on the world as well as people’s pockets. There was increased starvation and malnutrition due to the rising rate of poverty in many countries. Nigeria saw no different, as food and job insecurity began to affect so many households, causing a lot of conflict on the home front. Palliatives provided by the Federal Government which were to serve as relief for stay-at-home citizens, especially those residing in rural areas were hoarded and even sold.

In times of economic hardships, families resort to using other means to survive and cope such as using their savings, taking loans from close associates, or even selling off their assets. The inability to provide for the family can lead to a lot of conflicts between spouses which leads to domestic violence (Bedru B Balana et al., 2022).

Several respondents narrated how food insecurity has been a source of friction in their homes:

“No., yes, I faced some challenges with going out, coming home, and food scarcity. My husband could not work, and I have nothing to do, somedays we go to bed on an empty stomach. I try to remind him that my child cannot cope with the hunger but there is not much he can do. He gets annoyed and frustrated sometimes. This covid-19 restriction caused a lot of problems in my home because my husband eventually lost a lot of money. After all, he could not continue with his business, and he cannot sell his assets to people for now because everyone complains about financial constraints. We are in a financial crisis. (Bintu, 22, interviewed September 2022).

Another respondent narrated:

“During the pandemic, my husband used to beat me a lot. He said I talk back, and my co-wives always complained to him about me. They said I disrespect them and send their children on errands. He used to get angry and hit me without asking me. Even when I ask for money for food, he shouts, the children go hungry on many occasions, or they sleep hungry. He asks me to feed them, he believes I have money. I feel like a prisoner in this marriage” (Auta, 28, interviewed September 2022).

In addition to this, another respondent narrated the following:

“Yes, my routine has changed a lot, during the pandemic, I did a lot of house chores. I had to cater to my husband and 2 kids which made care work more demanding” (Sara, 35, interviewed, September 2022).

4.3.4 Food insecurity

Similar incidents were narrated by many respondents, it which go without saying, that women have experienced a lot of challenges during the lockdown, hunger being one of them. It is even worse because these women have no jobs and no

means of livelihood, making them solely dependent on their spouses. This point of view is further reinforced by (B. B. Balana et al., 2022) where the emphasis was laid on a heavy decline in income which was largely affected by the restriction of movement during the Covid-19 lockdown. Many households were faced with food insecurity and illnesses related to malnutrition, alongside inaccessibility to proper health care. So many households in developing countries depend on their farm produce for staple foods such as rice, yam, beans, and potatoes, but due to the restriction of movements, people could hardly go to work on their farms, making it difficult for them to grow anything to eat.

4.4 Shadow of Education Lockdown

As a result of the lockdown and closure of schools, girls had to stay at home. Although an E-learning platform was created to ensure that school children do not lag the curriculum by attending classes online, it proved abortive because young girls were more occupied with house chores and domestic responsibilities, leaving them with lesser time than the boys to catch up on their schoolwork and assignments.

Also, girls were at a higher risk of experiencing domestic and sexual violence because the bulk of the time meant to be spent in school was spent at home, creating easier access for predators.

4.4.1 Inability to adhere to Covid-19 safety guidelines (due to illiteracy)

One of the biggest challenges faced by northern Nigerian women is illiteracy and this has been one of the reasons for the rapid spread of Covid-19 because most of the women can neither read nor write, this makes it difficult for them to read about safety and preventive measures during the lockdown. It is common practice in the north that women need not receive a formal education or usually only attend elementary schools in their lifetime. Seeking health care becomes a task because they find it difficult to effectively communicate in English and always need a translator to assist.

4.4.2 Risk of sexual abuse

Due to the absence of guidance and preoccupation, girls find themselves more vulnerable to sexual activities and abuse which leads to unwanted/unplanned pregnancies which would put a long halt on their education and give rise to stigmatization. This is more evident in conflict-affected regions where refugee girls are made to see education as a privilege or a waste of time rather than a human right.

4.4.3 Increased child labor

Despite the stay-at-home initiative, parents have seen this as an opportunity to turn their children into money-making machines, practically forcing them to hawk, among other things, to make ends meet. It would not go unnoticed that female children are engaged more in hawking and roadside sales while the risk of infection gets higher.

4.4.4 Increased burden of domestic chores for girls

Due to the longstanding belief that house chores are meant for females, the girl child tends to lose out even in the attendance of online classes. The workload becomes unbearable, causing difficulty in catching up with assignments and lessons (Akintolu et al., 2021).

4.5 Cultural and Familial Relations

4.5.1 Marriage and institutionalized violence

While global attention is now focusing on gender equality, with the 5th goal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) being gender equality, women in Nigeria, as with the rest of the world still struggle with frequent disparities. Many factors are responsible for this bias and inequalities as discussed in previous chapters, but one cannot take away the dominance of culture and tradition in northern Nigeria. Some studies have shown that the level of education of women creates a huge gap and gives room for inequality to prevail. Sadly, this is the case in the north due to

females not being enrolled in schools (formal education). This has caused a heavy dependency on men and leads to frustration when expected responsibilities are not carried out (O. Adeosun & K. Owolabi, 2021).

Domestic violence has been the most recorded human rights violation crime and saw rising numbers during the Covid-19 lockdown. Young married girls reported various incidents of domestic violence during the lockdown, varying from increased coercion to conceive against their wish (39%) by their spouses, refusal of partners to allow them access family planning and birth control clinics (23%), to experiencing physical assault for refusing to get pregnant (20%). A lot of these girls experience physical abuse in form of being punched, kicked, slapped, and/or even forced to have sex by their partners (Taiwo et al., 2020).

There have been many studies about women and girls in northern Nigeria, especially the majority tribe which is Hausa-Fulani, where poverty and illiteracy are deeply rooted. Children hardly go to school and end up becoming beggars on the streets while female children are mostly engaged in hawking and early/child marriage.

Unfortunately, the northern region of Nigeria has been compared in similarity with an “endangered species” where a lot of the ills of the country are

beset; illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, inaccessibility to healthcare and reproductive rights for women and girls, and recently, insecurity (Ogbe, 2020).

4.5.1.1 Marriage as Trade

One of the subtopics under gender bias and inequality as mentioned above is marriage as a trade. In so many homes where the parents have incurred a heavy amount of debt, the inability to pay back such loans push them into giving their female children in return for the debt. This practice is strongly reinforced by the payment of the bride price as a marriage custom (Anderson, 2007).

An excerpt from one of the respondents interviewed portrays marriage as trade, poverty, and illiteracy in northern Nigeria. She says:

“I am not happy, especially with the burden of taking care of my children, I wish I could go back home but I know that may never happen.

my parents see my marriage as a relief to them because they will have fewer mouths to feed and my father used me to pay off a huge debt that he incurred from his friend when he married a new wife. I was the collateral. My husband is too old for me, and he has 2 other wives in this small house. I wish I could go to school but they say that is only for boys, they will be wasting money if they send me to school. I am stuck here with my children.” (Auta, 28, interviewed September 2022).

As with other parts of Nigeria, the apparent preference for male children is quite common, largely due to the patriarchal nature of our society. This has caused a great deal of harm to female children, the least being low self-worth/self-esteem. Parents view the boys as the successors in the home while women will be married away to become another man's property and bear his name, these girls are married off, sometimes even before puberty to men who are old enough to be their grandfathers. In some families, the bride price is used to upset bills incurred by her family (Alabi, 2014). This is exactly the situation of the respondent (Auta, 28) quoted above.

The practice of marriage as a trade thrives mainly through polygamy and dowry. Fathers of these unfortunate young girls usually collect loans from financially well-off men who would eventually wish to marry younger wives in addition to their wives at home. It appears traditional marriage customs in northern Nigeria encourage this practice through the dowry and polygamy system (Rexer, 2022).

4.5.1.2 Early/Child Marriage

Child marriage is a violation of human rights. The issue of child marriage in northern Nigeria is a serious cause for concern as it is seemingly an ageless culture and tradition. In addition to this, the most discriminated female children who are exposed to this are the uneducated. For girls in school, adolescent pregnancy is one of the leading causes of female school dropout, and many adolescent mothers hardly ever go back to school. More cases of child marriage emerge and thrive mostly in poverty-stricken homes where parents have too many mouths to feed while some families claim to give out their daughters in early marriage to protect them from social vices. Research shows that only 35% of children and adolescents complete their primary education while only 15% can complete secondary education as against 97% and 88% in more stable socio-economic countries. Despite the predominance of child/early marriage in the north, child marriage is still illegal in Nigeria.

To worsen this situation, the lockdown saw several girls staying at home due to school closure and due to the negative economic impact on families, in addition to male child preference, girl children are easily given off in marriage to reduce parental responsibility. Child marriage harms female reproductive health and with the restriction of movement, most of these girls could not access healthcare (Girls Not Brides, 2022).

One of the major health implications of child marriage and pregnancy is Vesicovaginal Fistula, popularly known as VVF which is caused by prolonged obstructed labor during childbirth as well as injuries suffered during difficult gynecologic surgical procedures done during cesarian section deliveries. This is usually the case with underaged brides who have little or no formal education, live in rural areas, and perpetually live below the poverty line; their arrival at the hospital if ever is usually after endless hours of prolonged labor at home, causing them to be in near-death situations (Wall et al., 2005).

4.5.1.3 Forced/arranged marriage

The imposition of adult males on young female children is a common practice in many places around the world including Nigeria. This occurrence is very rampant in the northern region of Nigeria, especially amongst the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group. Data from the United Nations reveals that 48% of Hausa-Fulani in northern Nigeria are married off before the age of 15, while 78% of them are married at the age of 18. Reasons for forced marriages range from supposed fear of female children engaging in premarital and risky sexual behavior to maintaining “family honor” and even the fear of homosexuality by parents.

Forced marriage is often characterized by extreme coercion, physical, mental, and emotional torture, and abuse. Families sometimes go as far as lying and tricking the victim into believing they're going abroad to further their education or start a new life (Itebiye, 2016). Under the Nigerian Civil Law, forced marriage is a crime against the law which attracts a 7-year jail term. The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015 (VAPP) criminalizes forced marriage, stating that it is a harmful traditional practice that is unlawful.

Another study presents a similar case where female representation is extremely low; from the family circle to higher administrative/government positions. The impossible practice of requesting and favoring male children over females is still very much existent in present-day Nigeria. In many homes where financial resources are limited, female children learn/acquire a skill after basic education (elementary school), while the fortunate ones go as far as high school before dropping out to continue with a skill or a trade. The boys, on the other hand, have the privilege of attending higher (tertiary) institutions where they take professional courses. Some of the lucky female children who are sent to tertiary institutions with almost nothing end up engaging in prostitution while others offer services such as hair weaving, nail fixing, etc., for a token. These eventually become distractions, defeating the aim of going to school. Some female children

accept advances and marriage proposals from men who have promised to sponsor their education but most times, they end up getting pregnant and dropping out of school. This contributes to women's low education rate and inability to obtain blue- or white-collar jobs (Alex-Nmecha et al., 2020).

Similarly, some authors have elaborated in their paper on the negative impact of Covid-19 and its antecedent stay-at-home initiative. This can be seen in the number of domestic chores which the woman takes on during the lockdown, with schools closed, the burden of domestic chores, childcare, and even healthcare at home dramatically increased. This goes to show that it is not the availability of time or the presence of the man in the home that causes him to assist, rather, domestic chores, no matter how voluminous and energy consuming are still seen as the burden of the woman (Anauati, 2020).

A respondent talks about how religion is used to silence women, she says:

"I am covered in sadness because I know everybody will preach patience and submission. They say that God is with the patient. Most times, patient women

suffer in silence. Why would people use religion to punish others, especially women? It hurts” (Yumna, 32, interviewed September 2022).

Another respondent highlights the following:

“They frown at reports and tell you to learn to exercise more patience. They say that a good Muslim must be patient, but the men are not patient, I don’t understand” (Nina, 24, interviewed September 2022).

In agreement with the respondents’ viewpoint, it is not uncommon for religion or tradition to be used to mute and subdue women, brainwashing them into believing that resistance is seen as disobedience in religion. This further confirms that most practices, beliefs, and norms are shaped by traditions and partly religion which influences and molds the behavior of men, causing them to believe that they are ordained by God to be superior to women and a force to be obeyed. When these do not achieve what they have preconditioned their minds to believe, violence against women (VAW) usually sets in (*Bimbo Stanley Omopo, Impact of Covid-19 On Religious Practices And Religious Conviviality In Ibadan: The Place Of Religious Leaders In Maintaining Close-Knit Religious Communities, 2021*).

4.5.2 Gender-based violence as a private matter

It would be near impossible to talk about domestic and gender-based violence without bringing culture and tradition into the picture. As seen in many cultures all over the world, Nigeria also has its share of the negative impact of culture on the very existence of women and girls. It is generally the culture in northern Nigeria that molds the behaviors of both genders into who or what is befitting or acceptable in their respective societies. While these are ongoing, traditional leaders and village chiefs hardly address such issues mainly because of the fear of retribution by other leaders (*Effect of Covid-19 On Gender-Based Violence, UK Aid, Partnership to Engage, Reform, And Learn, September 2020*).

A key factor that restricts women and girls from attaining their full potential and maximizing opportunities such as formal education is the cultural bias which makes female children appear less significant or “useful” to certain cultural societies. This patriarchal system encourages early and child marriage which inevitably leads to an endless routine of domestic chores and early pregnancies and complications which is worsened by poor or lack of accessibility to healthcare (Amin, 2005).

One of the respondents revealed in the interview, her experience when asked about how safe she feels in her community and how the community responds to cases of domestic violence:

“I don’t feel safe in this community, especially as a woman, their response to domestic violence is very poor, and it is usually hidden, nobody wants to speak up about it because our culture frowns at women reporting their husbands, especially for physical abuse my sister-in-law has also experienced domestic violence, but she is reproached for talking about it”

From this excerpt, it is evident that most African, Nigerian, and northern Nigerian cultures aim to silence and oppress women.

Another respondent narrates thus:

“Even in my home, it was the excessive beating that caused me to leave. Women don’t speak up, and that is why you don’t hear much about it. So many men think they are lords in their houses, it is this African society that causes women to raise such men who cause other women so much pain. My husband feels like he will die if he speaks a good word to me or the children. He thinks he is beyond kindness”
(Yumna, 32, interviewed September 2022).

To further affirm these narrations, another respondent says:

“Are you not from the north? Do you report issues in your marriage (scoffs...) but you know we (women) are not allowed to say much with regards to marital issues, nobody supports that, even when they try to mediate, they stop after a few reports and tell you that everyone has marital problems, yet they are still married. Always preaching patience. The elders say that a successful marriage is one with few complaints and fewer mediators. (Nina, 24, interviewed September 2022).

4.6 Religious/Traditional Prejudice

It is common knowledge that religion is almost as old as tradition and the Hausa/Fulani culture and tradition, it is mostly intertwined with religion. This causes certain traditional and cultural beliefs to be perceived as religious laws which are usually far from reality. In as much as both Islam and Christianity preach submission on the part of the wife, subjugation, and cultural imposition of “marital slavery” is the opposite of what is being proclaimed by both religions.

4.6.1 Harmful Traditional Practices

Practices such as domestic violence, female genital mutilation, marital rape, and domination are more of a cultural than the religious background. These practices

were exacerbated during the lockdown, and with fewer health care centers available, many women and girls had to dance to the tune of tradition, becoming victims of several forms of violence as mentioned above, and having nowhere to run to.

With several attempts by the Nigerian government to implement policies to bring this practice to the barest minimum, alongside campaigns by international organizations, it appears to remain unphased, largely due to ethnicity and culture.

4.6.2 Conservatism and ignorance

While conservative Muslims uphold the belief that child marriage is permitted in Islam, stating that the holy prophet married a 9-year-old wife, they tend to always leave out information about the marriage being consummated after she was well over 18 years of age. There is an opposing group of Muslims who disagree and argue that a girl child should attain and exceed puberty and experience emotional marriage before she is married. Moreso, this practice is mostly amongst the uneducated Hausa/Fulanis while Yorubas and other tribes who have had some level of education marry much later and go ahead to be gainfully employed, even after marriage (Mobolaji et al., 2020).

4.7 Female Suppression

Dating as far back as centuries ago, women have been led to believe that they are responsible for catering to the needs of men and children. Unpaid work has been considered more befitting of females and more of an abomination for males.

Furthermore, quoting the popular Nigerian feminist, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie as she addresses the issue of systemic suppression of the female gender “*we do a greater disservice to girls because we raise them to cater to the fragile egos of males*”(Adichie, 2009).

This is not far from the truth as the interviews revealed similar daunting situations. One of the respondents narrated:

“..... most women deny being abused, even after witnessing them being abused., they try to protect the perpetrator. They view it as a thing of shame to report one’s husband to the authorities. Sometimes they are rebuffed and scolded by elders, telling them they need to go back and take care of their homes. Nobody listens to you just because your husband hit you” (Daisy, 20, September 2022).

4.7.1 Fear and suppression

Another worrisome discovery while running my analysis was the fact that women hardly stand up for their fellow women, especially in this part of the world where

women are brainwashed into believing that spousal abuse should be kept secret and worn like a badge of honor.

One cannot take away subservience from suppression as it appears that the latter is exerted on women to achieve the former. In another study in Nigeria, it was recorded that the percentage of respondents in an interview who believed that men are superior to women were of the age of 41 and above, this class of respondents were less or not educated on average and held strongly to their opinions and belief that women were the weaker sex, placed on earth to be of servitude to such men (Olanrewaju, 2018).

4.7.2 Internalization of abuse

Similarly, many authors have written about such situations where women face oppression, suppression, terrorization, and patriarchy meted out by men as with the case of many young girls who have been beset by Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF) which is a condition caused by early marriage and child rape; yet women discriminate, stigmatize, humiliate, and even banish such girls from appearing in their gatherings (Ebekue, 2018).

Another respondent says:

“I have nobody to report to because my parents will send me back to him if I make a report, they don’t want to be stigmatized, I feel helpless. I am always

weak and hungry so I cannot fight back, he makes me afraid of him and he dominates me because he knows nobody sees marital issues as something that should be publicized. It is seen as a sign of failure on the part of a woman when the community is aware of her troubles. I should be obedient and submissive always.” (Kyauta, 34, September 2022).

In Nigeria, there is hardly any, or much importance given to women, often, they are seen as lesser citizens whose proper place is certainly the kitchen. This is one of the key factors that contribute to the perception of women on the home front and society at large. It is, therefore, not out of place to say that almost every woman who has encountered a male has had a taste of patriarchy. Many feminist theories have explored the negative impacts of the existence of patriarchy globally. Theorists such as Carole Pateman is quoted to have said that “the patriarchal makeup of the contrast between men and women is the political distinction between freedom and subjection” (Okin, 1990). Unfortunately, our present-day societal structure has set limitations for women, creating differing roles even within the family where the relationship between spouses is that of subjugation and male dominance (Godiya Allanana, 2013).

Another respondent gives a clear picture of her experience in the hands of her spouse, she says:

“During the pandemic, my husband used to beat me a lot. He said I talk back, and my co-wives always complained to him about me. They said I disrespect them and send their children on errands. He used to get angry and hit me without asking me. Even when I ask for money for food, he shouts, the children go hungry on many occasions, or they sleep hungry. He asks me to feed them, he believes I have money. I feel like a prisoner in this marriage” (Auta, 28, September 2022).

4.7.3 Shame

Studies have shown that most women tend to acknowledge gender-based violence without much resistance. The acceptance of this behavior due to socio-cultural norms, traditions, and religious beliefs creates room for more harmful situations, causing such practices to be seen as permissible on the part of the man. What is usually responsible for the silence of women experiencing domestic violence is shame. So many societies across the globe attach a stigma to negative social ills, especially concerning physical and sexual violence, making it difficult for women to raise their voices concerning their experiences with their partners. An instance is rape victims who are revictimized and usually blamed for the crime of the perpetrator and sometimes even going as far as punishing them and ostracizing them from society (Ajayi et al., 2022).

4.7.3.1 Stigmatization of abused women

In the same light, there is a stigma attached to most African cultures and traditions which believe that being unmarried, divorced, or even having challenges in marriage is a thing of shame and most women and girls who experience these are seen as failures in the African society. Made worse by the lockdown, women could not make reports of abuse to humanitarian organizations and have had to stay put in their homes, with abusive spouses throughout the long period of the lockdown. They are mostly silenced due to the fear of being stigmatized by neighbors, family, or even being divorced.

It is not uncommon that women are seen as responsible for the success or failure of their marriages and are expected to manage situations even when they pose physical and emotional harm to them. African women usually endure violence in marriage due to the shame associated with being divorced or unmarried and this action has been a basis for abuse by their spouses/partners, knowing that they have nowhere to go and no other option but to stay (*Ajayi, Chinyere Et. Al, The Role of Cultural Beliefs, Norms, and Practices in Nigerian Women's Experiences of Sexual Abuse and Violence in Northwest of England, 2022*).

Following the interview with respondents, their responses further confirm the above statements:

“No, I have never reported it because my parents will send me back. They do not want to become the laughingstock of our community so they can never allow me to come home to report my situation. My sister is back home with her children and people talk around our neighborhood. My parents must feed her and her children because her husband does nothing to support his children. It is too much for them, I cannot go home” (Amina, 25, interviewed September 2022).

Another respondent was recorded to have said:

“..... most people deny being abused, even after witnessing them being abused., they try to protect the perpetrator. They view it as a thing of shame to report one’s husband to the authorities. Sometimes they are rebuffed and scolded by elders, telling them they need to go back and take care of their homes. Nobody listens to you just because your husband hit you”. (Daisy, 20, interviewed September 2022).

Chapter 5 Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

This study was conducted in a bid to identify and discuss gender-related issues and domestic violence in northern Nigeria during the Covid-19 lockdown. Gender-based violence unfortunately has become the order of the day and certain factors/indicators were used to identify how gender inequality has an adverse effect on many facets of women's life and society at large.

The findings of this study answered the research question: What are the determining factors that brought about an increase in gender-based violence in northern Nigeria during the Covid-19 lockdown?

In answering the above question, the study elaborated on the situation of women who are being violated and suffer in silence, it further revealed that a number of factors which include but are not limited to; the burden of unpaid work/care work, misconceptions regarding religion, tradition, cultural stereotypes, and financial insecurity contributed to the rise in the cases of gender-based violence during the lockdown, highlighting the direct link between the rise in GBV cases and Covid-19 lockdown. Also, the absence of humanitarian services and interventions, including courts closing during the lockdown caused abusive situations between partners to exacerbate. Finally, heavy financial dependence

played a major role in aggravating tension and frustration between spouses which was fueled by the cultural shame of victims of domestic violence returning home to their parents further gave room for these women to continue to internalize gender-based violence in so many ways, shapes, and forms meted out by their spouses.

Data collected did not contradict the preconceived notion that gender-based violence has been on a rapid increase since the lockdown. Also, existing literature confirmed some concerns regarding this study such as the effect of the lockdown on education, labor market, political participation, cultural and familial relations which has caused GBV to skyrocket to be true. Women are and continue to suffer in silence from gender-based violence in northern Nigeria, owing to the mindset, which is sharpened by mostly culture, then religion.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

During this study, the major challenge I faced was the fact that a good number of women in the northern region are uneducated and extremely conservative which makes it difficult for them to express themselves freely or understand the true concept of domestic violence. Nonetheless, I was able to get a good number of women to narrate their experiences without much hassle. Although, very detailed and expressive interviews were major with women who have had some form or

formal education. The number of the interviewees were limited and hard to generalize but it provided details of their experience.

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Appendix 1

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR “THE SHADOW PANDEMIC: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

EACH INTERVIEW WILL:

1. BE COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL
2. NO LONGER THAN 30 MINUTES
3. INCLUDE OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS IN ORDER TO ENSURE QUALITY OF DATA

Focus of questions	Sample questions
Experiences and behaviors	At what age did you get married? How old are you now? How old is your spouse? How did you get married? Does he respect you?

occupation	Do you have a job? What do you do?
Opinions and values	Tell me what you see as the position of your spouse in the family. In your opinion, do you think he is doing enough? Are you happy?
Knowledge	Have you received any form of education or sensitization on human rights and domestic violence?
Sensory observations	Describe what you think and see after an abusive incident.

Sample: Interview on Domestic (gender-based) violence in Northern Nigeria

<i>Purpose:</i>	Frequency of domestic abuse (Gender-based violence) during the covid-19 lockdown in your community
<i>Topic:</i>	To find out the extent of gender-based violence in northern Nigeria, specifically during the Covid-19 lockdown

Note: These set of questions are Covid-19 lockdown related

1.	Can you talk about whether or not you feel safe in your community?
2.	Do you have some thoughts on how your community is responding to domestic violence faced by women especially during the lockdown? Can you describe to me what you know about this?
3.	What was your daily routine during the pandemic? Has it changed?
4.	Have you experienced some form of conflict/violence before, during or after the pandemic lockdown?
5.	Have you ever reported? What kind of support did you get?
7.	Do you have anyone to talk about /report incidents of domestic violence to? Tell me about how your community perceives domestic/gender-based

	violence. Describe their reaction to reported cases
8.	Are there rapid response or human rights protection organizations working during the lockdown in your community?

Potential topics	What I want to learn	Proposed interview questions
Frequency of abuse	How often do individuals report cases of domestic violence in your community?	<p>How often do you experience domestic violence since you got married? [behaviors -current]</p> <p>Tell me about the feelings you experience when you are physically abused [behaviors-current]</p> <p>Have you considered making a report on your abusive situation? [behaviors -future]</p>

<p>Similar/recurring cases in community</p>	<p>Do other women and girls report incidents and their experiences of domestic violence to authorities?</p>	<p>Have you received support in the past for reported cases of DV? [values – past]</p> <p>Does your community encourage women to make reports to appropriate authorities when abused?</p> <p>How do you know about other abused women? [values – current]</p> <p>Would you encourage your daughter(s) to speak up when faced with any form of gender-based violence? [values – future]</p>
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Abstract in Korean

그림자 전염병: 나이지리아 북부의 젠더 기반 폭력

연세대학교 정경대학원

여성농촌지역개발 석사학위과정

Jamila. A. Hassan

팬데믹의 그림자(젠더 기반 폭력)는 이전의 전염병과 팬데믹이 출현하기 오래 전부터 존재해 왔습니다. 나이지리아 북부는 안보 문제에 직면해 있지만 코로나 19 대유행의 영향을 공평하게 받았습니다. 이 논문의 목적은 나이지리아 북부에서 Covid-19 젠더 기반 폭력의 영향을 더 잘 이해할 수 있도록 하는 것입니다. 여기에서 우리는 다양한 지표(노동 시장, 교육, 문화 및 가족 관계, 정치 참여)의 역할 및 젠더 기반 폭력과 관련하여 여성이 여성에게 미치는 covid-19의 영향을 측정하는 역할을 조사합니다. 포괄적인 질적 연구 계획을

사용한 후, Covid-19 봉쇄 기간 동안 이동 제한으로 인해 여성과 소녀들이 경험하는 가정 및 젠더 기반 폭력의 개념에 대한 통찰력이 생성되었습니다.

연구 질문에 답하기 위해 봉쇄 기간 동안 젠더 기반 폭력을 증가시킨 결정 요인은 무엇입니까? 13 명의 여성을 인터뷰했으며 연구 결과에 따르면 Covid-19의 출현과 봉쇄 기간 동안의 이동 제한으로 인해 나이지리아 북부에서 젠더 기반 폭력이 발생하고 악화되었습니다. 연구 결과, 특히 팬데믹 기간 동안 젠더 기반 폭력 피해자를 위해 신속 대응팀을 배치하면 나이지리아 북부 여성과 소녀들의 삶에 긍정적인 영향을 미치고 삶을 개선할 수 있을 것이라고 권고했습니다. 이 외에도 특히 팬데믹 기간 동안 학습 격차를 피하기 위해 학교에서 E-러닝을 위한 표준화된 플랫폼을 마련해야 합니다.

핵심단어: 코로나 19; 전염병, 봉쇄; 젠더 기반 폭력; 가정 폭력; 팬데믹의 그림자; 북부 나이지리아; 여성; 소녀들.