



Gender Based Violence against Women during COVID – 19 Pandemic: A Case Study of Gwagwalada, Abuja - Nigeria

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Abstract

Violence against women is an existing global crisis that thrives on other crises. Conflict, climate-related natural disasters, food insecurity and human rights violations all contribute to women and girls living with a sense of danger, even in their own homes, neighborhoods, or communities. The COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated isolation and social distancing, enabled a second, shadow pandemic of violence against women and girls, where they often found themselves in lockdown with their abusers. This study was carried out to determine the effect of COVID-19 pandemic during the 12 months period of total lockdown as related to gender based violence in Gwagwalada, a densely populated area in Nigeria Capital, Abuja. Primary data were collected by administering questionnaire to 585 women between the age of 18 and above through random sampling. Heise' ecological model was used to analysis the various types of domestic violence. The study revealed that violence increase was mainly due to increase in tensions in household, increased perpetrators' risk factors for violence, economic burden and survivors' limited access to support services available during the lockdown. Also the survey data shows that almost 1 in 3 women reported that they or a woman they know experienced a form of violence since the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings also revealed that about 1 in 4 women felt unsafe at home, citing physical abuse and increases in conflict as one of the reason during the lockdown period. Most of the women attributed increases in gender based violence due to financial issues, frustration and drunkenness from their male counterpart. It is recommended that proper awareness should be carried out on the danger of gender based violence and also the associated penalties. Also the government should encourage equality in employment and give high priority to women during employment. The government should also put in place necessary infrastructures like power supply to ease tension at home during such pandemic.

Keywords: Women, COVID – 19 Pandemic, Gender Violence

JEL Classification: F31, D5, E22

1.0 Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a rising crime to humanity, and of great concern to the society at large. These includes sexual, physical mental and economic harm inflicted on a person because of socially ascribed power imbalances between males and females. It also includes the *threat* of violence, coercion and deprivation of liberty, whether in public or private.

By nature, women are weaker sex to male, even with the adage that goes “what men can do men can do better”, women and girls have less power than men over their bodies, decisions and resources. Social norms, culture and religion condone men's use of violence as a form of

discipline and control, which reinforce gender inequality and perpetuate gender-based violence.

Globally, women and girls, especially adolescents are exposed to high gender violence, particularly in developing nations of the world (Nigeria). They are often deprived of basic social amenities such education, social welfare, right of expression even at point of negative consequences and danger.

According to Devenish and Afshar (2020) COVID-19 pandemic regrettably exposed and increased inequalities in gender balance within the society. Most of the victim are those already on disadvantage conditions formed by the (social) determinants of health, including, marital status, low income, age, race, geographic location, migration status, disability, educational disadvantage and health status.

According to UNFPA 2020, reported cases of this shadow pandemic in Nigeria during the COVID-19 lockdown have being in the increases causing public outcry and advocacy of women rights activists causes the government to declare a state of emergency and sign the act in to law against this menace (UNFPA 2020). Even at this, no much progress was achieve, everyday day pass, gender violence cases keep occurring. This incessant pandemic on gender violence on women is the framework for this paper as its center on specific area in the country (Gwagwalada).

The study is divided into five sections, section one deals with the introduction, section two expresses the review of related literatures, while section three discusses the methodology of the study. The outcomes of the research are presented in section four while the conclusion with recommendations for the study are discussed in section five.

Statement of the Research Problem

Gender based violence against mankind is a criminal advocate mostly promulgate by non-governmental organisation, civic societies and government. Individual, society, organisations, countries fumes against gender violation against women, and other evil acts. The beginning of COVID -19 worsen the incidence due to over staying in the house during lockdown, women became more disposed to series of gender violence leading to spouses killing one another, marriage separation, complete divorce, drug addiction, just to mention a few.

Most women and girl affected, found themselves under lockdown with violent partners and little resources to help themselves under this unamiable situation. It is the fundamental duty of government to provide protection for life and property of member of the society. Government alone cannot do that, all hands must be on deck to ensure that, society, individual, member, groups are not given this ill meted treatment. The call for concern is the fundamental reason why it is appropriate to add value by undergoing a research of this subject matter by analytically filling research gap in establishing the age group that are prone more to gender violence during the period of lockdown in COVID-19 period. In line with the afore-mention statement, it is pertinent to ask some underlining questions suitable for the purpose of this study.

Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the study –

- How did COVID -19 pandemic influence gender based violence on women and girls
- Did gender based violence against women of increase or decrease during the lockdown.
- What age group were mostly affected with gender based violence during the period of lockdown

Objectives of the Study.

The main objective of this study is gender based violence against women during COVID – 19 pandemic in Abuja. The specific objectives are to:

- To examine the influence of COVID -19 pandemic on gender based violence on women and girls.
- To determine the effect of COVID -19 pandemic on gender based violence volatility on women.
- To examine the age group that is mostly affected during the period of lockdown of COVID -19.

Research Hypotheses.

In this study, a research questionnaire was drawn using primary data. To ascertain the extent the colossal damage during COVID -19 lockdown. 700 questionnaire were administrated with distributed 585 respondents (Figure 1) and about 115 are either damaged, unreturned or not properly filled. Age range between 25-30 have the highest respondents of about 26.3 percent while age bracket between 36-40 has the lowest respondent of about 16 percent (Figure 2.0).

Figure 2.0. Age range distribution of respondents

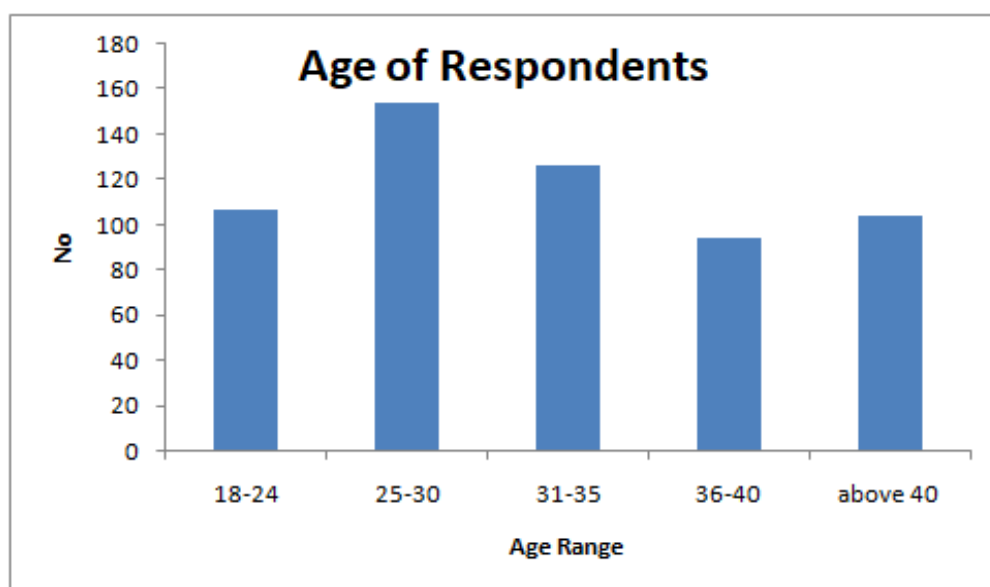
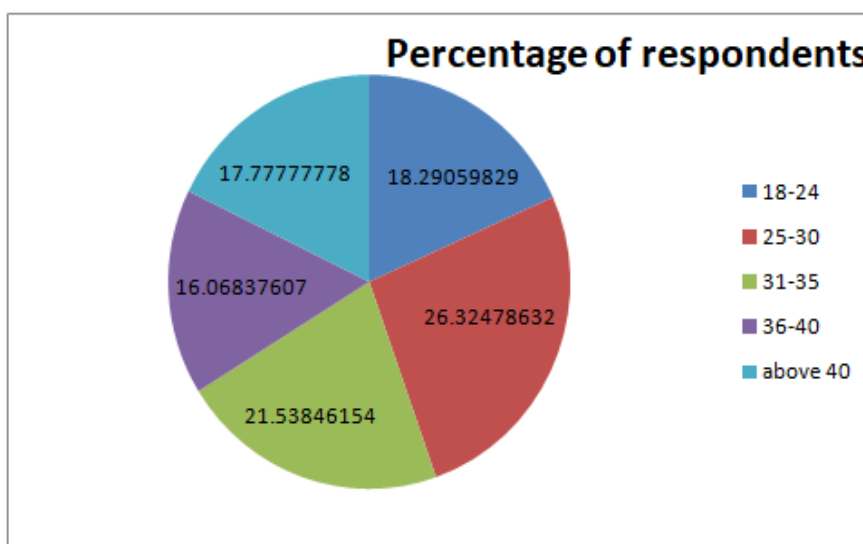


Figure 3.0. Percentage distribution of respondents



The respondents are selected based on their profession, this included house wives, civil servants, Trader and others. The others are those who choose not to declare their status (Table 1.0)

Despite advocacy and efforts, gendered violence persists globally and increased during COVID-19. The loss of employment and income, lockdown and quarantine measures and reduced access to health and social services has made the global pandemic dangerous to women and girls beyond contracting the illness. The COVID-19 pandemic has not only increased the risk of forms of violence such as intimate partner violence, it has also led to an increase in frequency and severity of other types of violence; thus this study analyzed the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on gender based violence among women and girls in Keffi, Nassarawa state, Nigeria and also what needed to be done.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

Basic concept as relates to this work are discussed below

Gender Based Violence – defined as a negative discrimination against sex. The sex discrimination could be male or women of different age groups or brackets, that is detrimental to the co -existence of mankind.

COVID -19- is a respiratory deadly disease that naturally spread virus round the world that resulted to so many death, cautiously people were prevented from having physical contacts, face masks were used to avoid respiratory contact, and the world was on total lock down for months trying ascertain the causes and solution to the epidemic that spread like a wild fire.

2.2 Theoretical Framework.

2.2.1 The Theory of Change

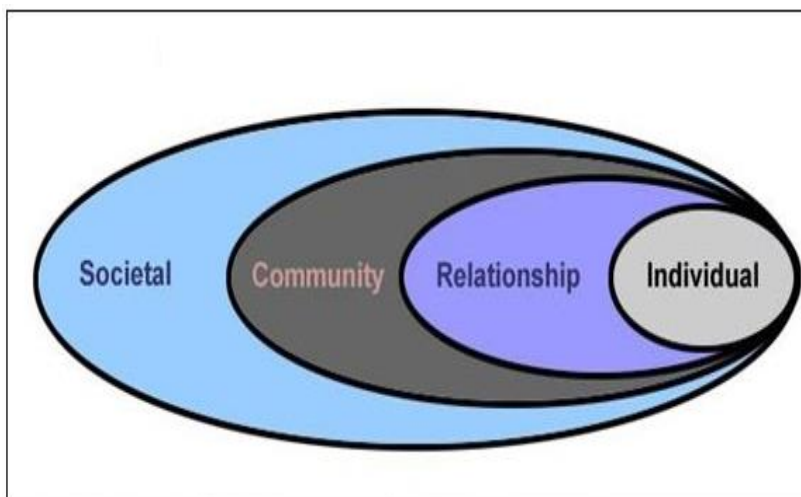
Following the review of the gender base violence against women literature, the theoretical framework used to capture this violation against women is based on the theory of change, which assumes that the state has primary responsibility for action on violence against women and girls; national governments are legally bound to, and hold the ultimate responsibility for, the implementation of laws, policies and services related to violence against women and girls and can, and should be, held accountable for doing so.

This theory underpin Heise's Ecological model which tries to explains, the dynamics, complex and multi –dimensional phenonmemon of gender violence among women, in line with (Crowell & Burgess, 1996; Miller, 1994; O'Toole, Schiffman, & Edwards, 2007) that explain the complexity of gender violence against women.

Heise (1998; 2011) model was adopted, generally known as the Heise's Ecological model to explain the dynamics of gender violence among women. This model suggests that Gender Based Violence is influenced by a complex array of interconnected factors across individual, relationship, community, and macro-social levels.

The ecological model (Figure 1.0), presents risk factors at the individual level in combination with risk factors within relationships or the family, the community, and at the broader societal/institutional level to assess the likelihood of a woman's experiencing violence in a particular situation (Heise, 1999).

Figure 1.0: Heise's Ecological Model for Understanding Violence



Source: Heise et al., (1999) and Krug et al., (2002)

The ecological approach aims to ensure that interventions consider and address the conditions across different levels (e.g. individual, family, community and society), which affect women and girls' risks of experiencing violence. As illustrated in the model there are biological, social, cultural and economic factors and norms at each layer

that may increase men's risk of perpetrating violence and a woman's risk of experiencing it

2.3 Empirical Review

A lot of literature on gender violence exists and many authors try to find out the number of cases and types of gender violence. Little attention is paid to the complex factors associated with this shadow pandemic. Mittal S. and Singh T. (2020); highlighted that isolation and lockdown becomes necessary during a wide outbreak of pandemic such as COVID -19, but it comes with a serious psychological and socially disruptive consequences know as quarantine paradox that also includes a surge in the cases of gender-based violence.

Mshellia (2021), used secondary data, and identified different forms of violence which include beating, rape, humiliation, verbal abuse, widowhood practices, early marriage, sexual harassment and female genital mutilation. Consequences of the acts as identified in the study include depression, suicide, murder, sexually transmitted diseases, and physical injuries. During gender based violence target among women, some author are of the opinion that most of the factors causing such act remain more of physiological effects and hence it is advisable that women facing such challenges should stay away from their intimate partners. (Sev'er 2002; Wong and Sokroen 2010).

Charles Chukwurah Mezie-Okoye (2020) urged that COVID- 19 lockdown was not exception to gender based violence and that majority of the single mother in Nigeria, have small businesses that brings food to the table. Ohiara and Ikubor (2021) urged contrarily, the containment of the second wave of covid-19 in public health system in Nigeria is a big challenges due to short supply for oxygen resource equipment, considering the rise in cases, this had affected the society through systematic lockdown and stay at home directives which had adverse effects on peoples' livelihood despite its international values.

Charlotte M. Roy et al. (2022) in support of the assertion urged that the spread of the virus have had negative impact on women and girls, increasing their vulnerability to gender –based violence (GBV).

According to Modupe Taiwo et al (2020).asserted the spread of the virus has severely disrupted normal life around the world and this had widened gaps in gender relations and gender equity. Violence in the home had worsen, prolonged quarantine and economic stressors had increased tension in the household.

Atinuke Odukoye (2021), urged that the lockdown during COVID -19 pandemic has revealed that a lot of gender of based violence are going on in the communities. The situation which threatens the lives and livelihoods of women and girls made the United Nations label the country 'Shadow Pandemic'. Statistics three states, Lagos State, Ogun State and Federal Capital Territory was analysed in the study.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopts the Collier and Elman (2008) survey method which involved large number of persons using an unbiased sample from the population of the study. It involved using questionnaires and sometimes interview or test to generate data from the sample and generalizing the results of findings from the data on the population from which it was drawn. Samples were selected from different places among women within Gwagwalada Area Council of FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. A random sampling technique was adopted in selecting the sample. However, the respondents were classified into five strata based on age bracket (18-24; 25-30; 31-40; 41-44 and above 45). Primary data were collected using questionnaire, interview and observation. 700 questionnaires were drawn and distributed randomly among women of different class and occupation. However, married women are mostly the target. The reason for using primary data through questionnaire is due to the fact most of the incident of gender based violence go unreported making the availability of secondary data almost scarce.

Data collected from the questionnaires were presented in tabular form and histogram. The data were analysed using frequency counts and percentages. Descriptive analysis was utilized in analyzing the results.

4.0 Presentation, Interpretation and Analysis

4.1 Statistical Distribution of Respondents

From the 700 questionnaire distributed 585 respondents (Figure 1) and about 115 are either damaged, unreturned or not properly filled. Age range between 25-30 have the highest respondents of about 26.3 percent while age bracket between 36-40 has the lowest respondent of about 16 percent (Figure 2.0)

Figure 2.0. Age range distribution of respondents

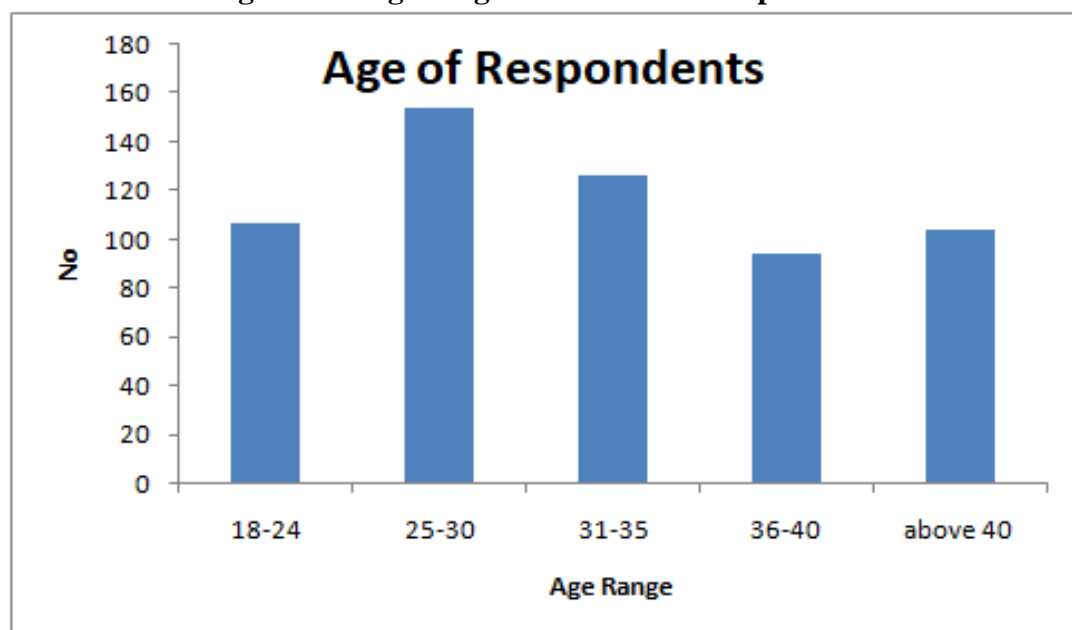
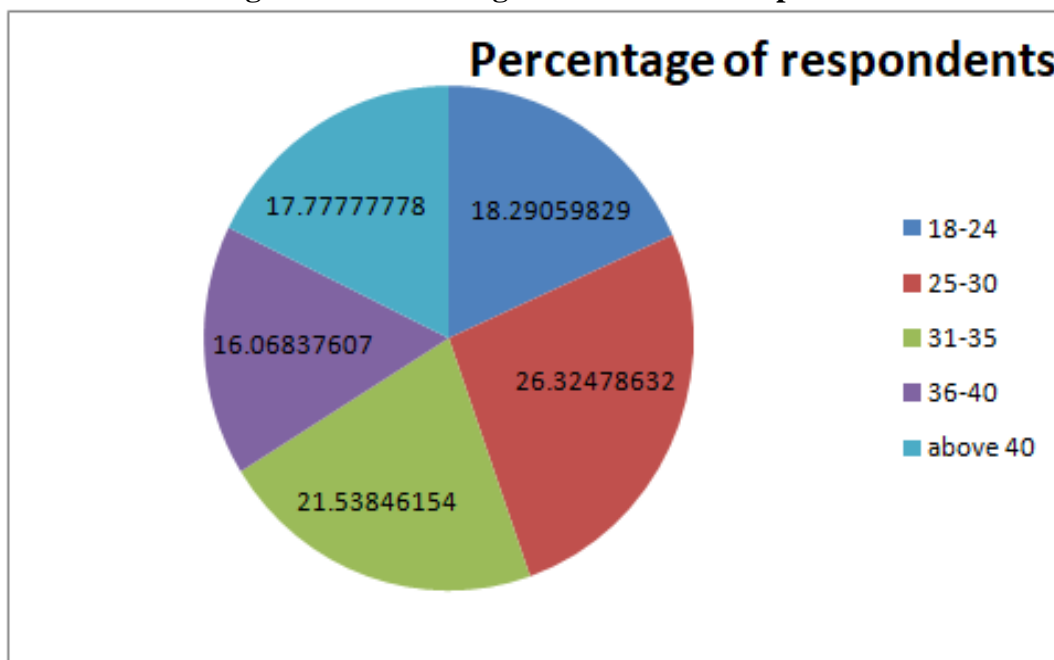


Figure 3.0. Percentage distribution of respondents



The respondents are selected based on their profession, this included house wives, civil servants, Trader and others. The others are those who choose not to declare their status (Table 1.0)

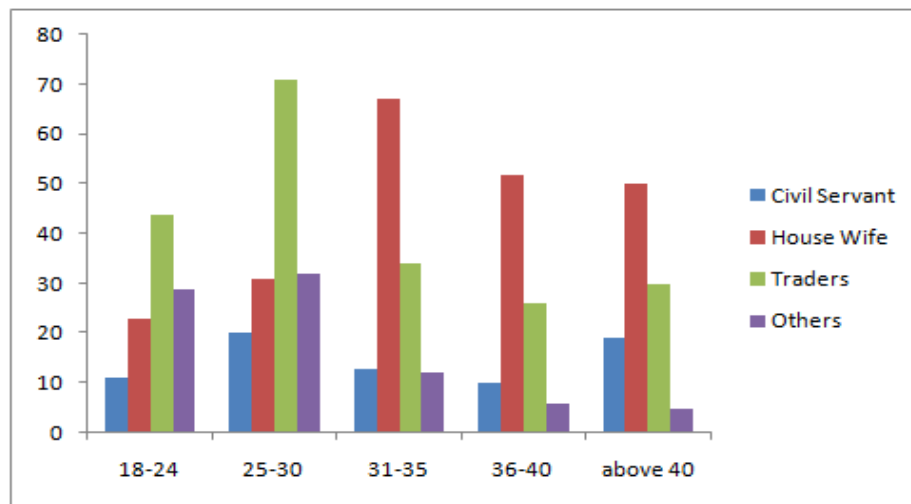
Table 1.0. Age classification of the respondents according to profession of women

Age Range	Civil Servant	House Wife	Traders	Others	Total
18 – 24	11	23	44	29	107
25 – 30	20	31	71	32	154
31 – 35	13	67	34	12	126
36 – 40	10	52	26	6	94
above 40	19	50	30	5	104
Total	73	223	205	84	

Source: Authors Survey 2021

Figure 4.0 shows that those traders within the age range of 25-30 year have the highest responses; this is closely follows by house wife within the age bracket of 31-35 years.

Figure 4.0. Distribution of respondents according the profession



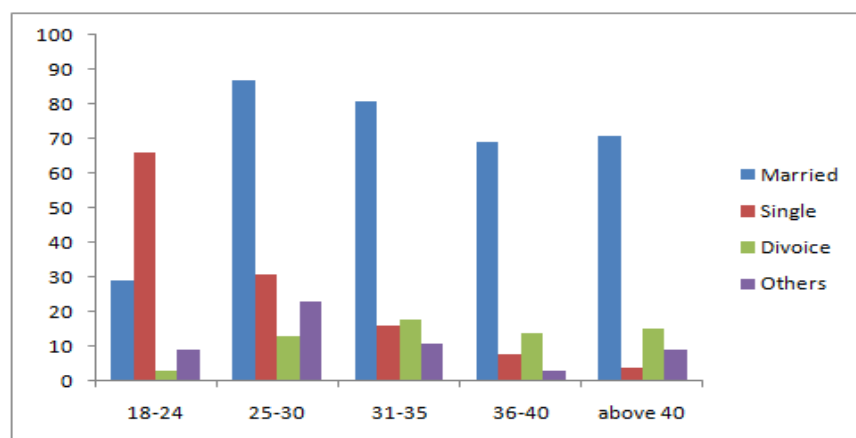
From Table 2.0 and Figure 4.0 below, a total number of 337, (about 57 percent of the) of the respondent are married women, 125 (about 21.4 percent are single), 63 (about 10.2 percent are divorcee), while 55 (about 9.4 percent) choice to keep their identity unknown.

Table 2.0. Distribution of respondent according to status

Age Range	Married	Single	Divorcé	Others	Total
18 – 24	29	66	3	9	107
25 – 30	87	31	13	23	154
31 – 35	81	16	18	11	126
36 – 40	69	8	14	3	94
above 40	71	4	15	9	99
otal	337	125	63	55	

Source: Authors Survey, 2021

Figure 5.0.: Histogram showing the distribution of respondent according to profession



4.2 Respondents opinion about verbal abuses and denial to basics resources

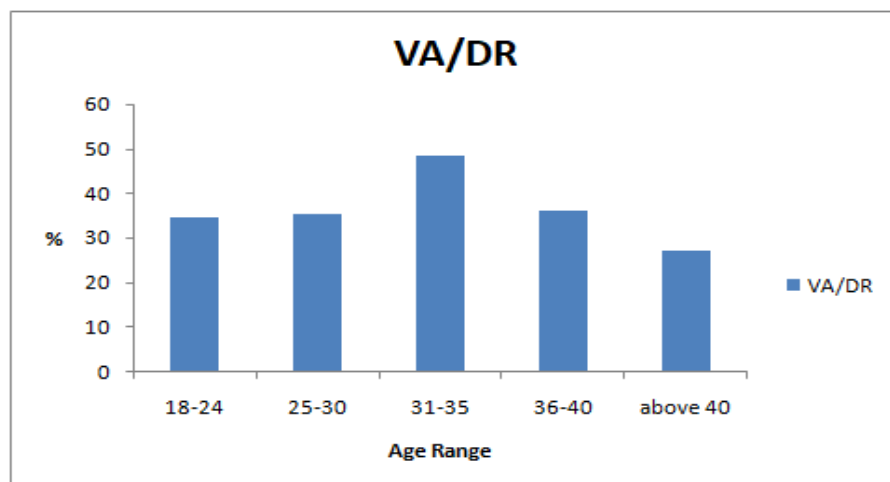
Table 3.0. Respondents' status according to age range

Age Range	Married	Single	Divorce	Others	Total	Percentage
18 – 24	11	21	2	3	37	34.57944
25 – 30	29	10	6	9	54	35.06494
31 – 35	41	8	8	4	61	48.4127
36 – 40	25	2	6	1	34	36.17021
above 40	22	1	3	2	28	26.92308
Total	128	42	25	19		
Percentage	37.9822	33.6	39.68254	45.45455		

Source: Authors Survey, 2021

The opinion of the respondents were seek to find out those that experience verbal abuses and denial to basic resources (VA/DR) during the COVID-19 lockdown (Table 3.0). 34.5% between the ages of 18-24 respondent positively to verbal abuses, 35 percent between the ages of 25-30 respondent positively, 48.4 percentages between the ages of 31-45 also respondents positively while those above 40 year have the lowest percentage of respond (28percent). From Figure 6.0, those within the age bracket of 31-35 experience more abuse and denial to basic resources at home during COVID-19 lockdown mostly by their close partners. This is basically attributed to the fact that the age group among women falls under their mid period of marriage and thus; they tend to face a lot of challenges arising from different factors. Most of the respondents confirmed that verbal abuses are very common during the COVID 19 lockdown. That most of the time the men counterpart became easily irritated with issues at home and this make them to verbally abuse women.

Figure 6.0. Percentage distribution of age range experiencing verbal abuses



4.1 Respondent opinion on denial of communication

Table 4.0. Communication denial among different status with age range

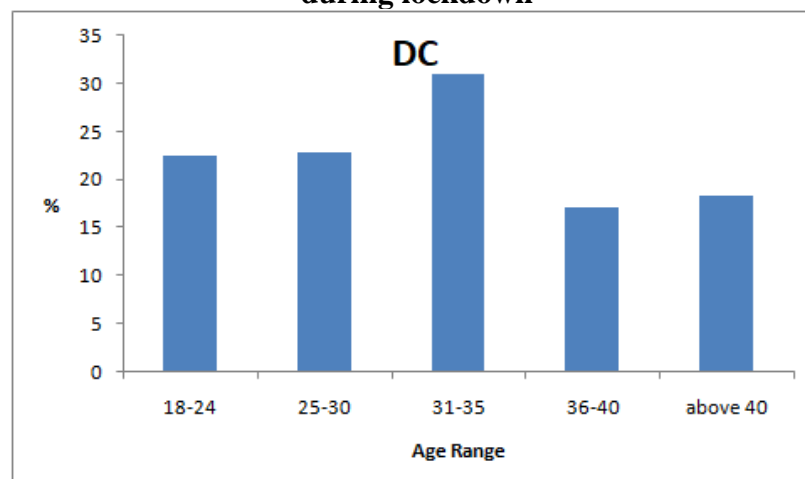
Age Range	Married	Single	Divorce	Others	Total	Percentage
18 – 24	7	13	3	1	24	22.42991
25 – 30	18	5	9	3	35	22.72727
31 – 35	21	4	7	7	39	30.95238
36 – 40	9	0	7	0	16	17.02128
above 40	14	2	1	2	19	18.26923
Total	69	24	27	13		
Percentage	20.47478	19.2	42.85714	23.63636		

Source: Authors Survey, 2021

Most of the respondent responses to denial of communication during lock down were low (Table 4.0). About 20 percent of women experience denial to communication during the lock, 19 percent (single experience denial, 42 percent of divorcee experience denial while 23 percentage of other experience such gender violence during the lock down. The low percentage of respondent among single and married women can be attributed to the fact that the Covid-19 lockdown make both partners close together spending much time communicating have having some fun. The high percentage of communication denial among divorcee is basically due the fact that, most of the men are married to their new spouse and at home with them during the lockdown period.

Figure 7.0 shows that those within the age range of 31-35 experience highest denial in communication from their male counterpart during the lockdown period of about 32 percent.

Figure 7.0. Percentage distribution of women experiencing communication denial during lockdown



4.2 Respondents opinion to Sexual Harassments

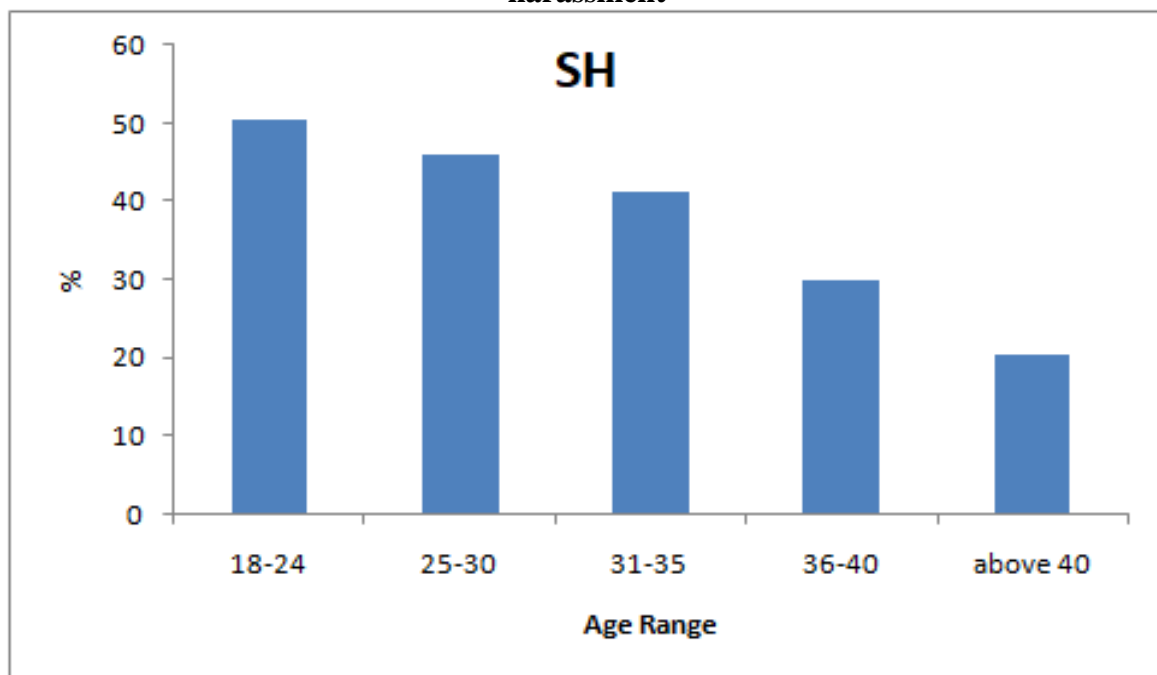
Table 5.0. Distribution of respondent to sexual Harassment

Age Range	Married	Single	Divorce	Others	Total	Percentage
18 – 24	17	32	2	3	54	50.46729
25 – 30	21	21	11	18	71	46.1039
31 – 35	23	10	13	6	52	41.26984
36 – 40	13	4	8	3	28	29.78723
above 40	10	1	5	5	21	20.19231
Total	84	68	39	35		
Percentage	24.92582	54.4	61.90476	70.90909		

Source: Authors Survey, 2021

The respondents opinion were seek about sexual harassment (SH) during lockdown period; about 24 percent of married women; 54 percent between single women; 61 percent of divorcee and 70 percent of others experience sexual harassment (Table 5.0). However, from the percentage distribution (Figure 8.0) those between the age range of 18-24 have the highest percentage of sexual harassment of about 54 percent and there is a generally reduction as the age range increases. This is attributed to the fact that younger women stand at risk of been sexually abused.

Figure 8.0. Percentage distribution of women with age range that experience sexual harassment



4.3 Respondents opinion on Physical Abuses

Table 6.0. Distribution of age range to physical abuses during COVID-19 lockdown

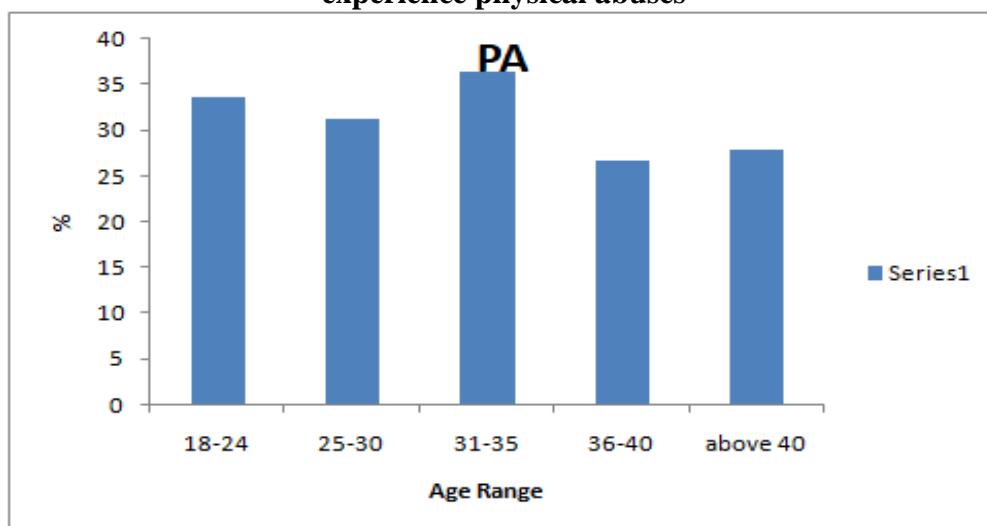
Age Range	Married	Single	Divorce	Others	Total	Percentage
18 – 24	12	19	1	4	36	33.64486
25 – 30	15	15	5	13	48	31.16883
31 – 35	32	6	5	3	46	36.50794
36 – 40	18	3	4	0	25	26.59574
above 40	21	2	3	3	29	27.88462
Total	98	45	18	23		
Percentage	29.08012	36	28.57143	32.72727		

Source: Authors Survey, 2021

Table 6.0 above shows that 29 percent of married women, 36 percent of single, 28 percent of divorcee and 32 percent other experience different form of physical abuses during the lockdown period in Gwagwalada, Abuja. Figure 8.0 shows that age range between 18-24 and 31-35 experience about 34 percent and 37 percent respectively. These range fall between early married couples and mid married couples respectively; thus considered as the age of intolerance in marriages.

From Figure 9.0, those within the age range of 31-35 experience highest percentage (about 36 percent) of physical abuses during COVID-19 lockdown and follow closer by those within the age group of 18-24 (about 28 percent) physical abuses may have aroused due to the high level of intolerance between the early inexperienced married couples and mid married couples.

Figure 8.0. Percentage distribution of women with age range that experience physical abuses



4.4 Respondents opinion on feeling safe at home

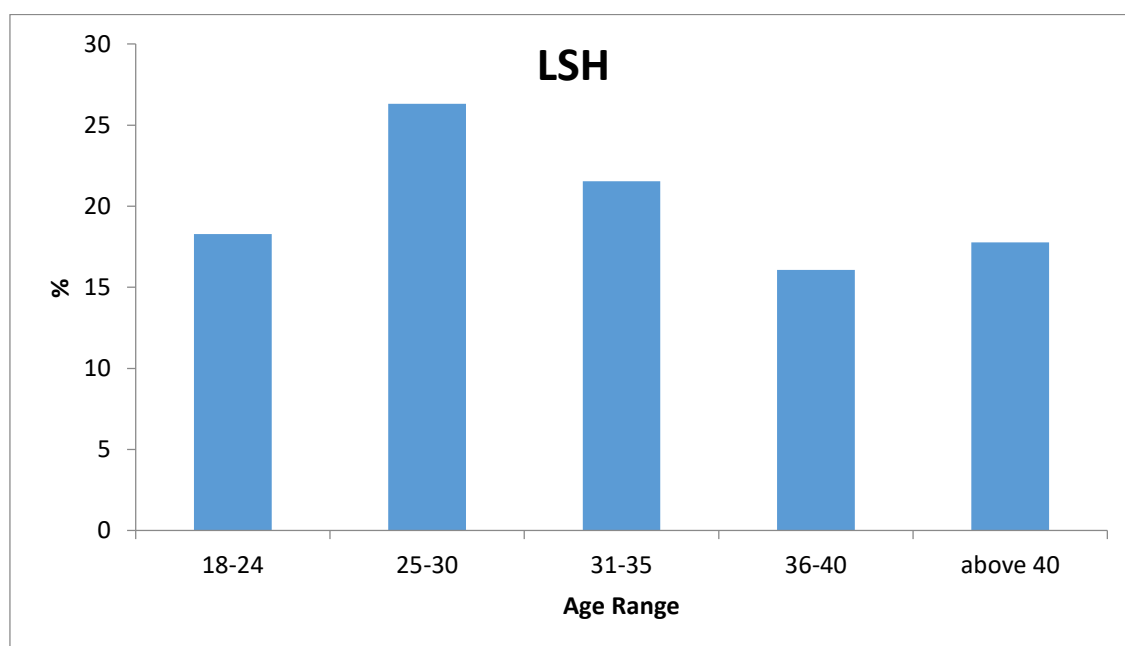
Table 7. Distribution of age range with those that felt unsafe at home during COVID-19 lockdown

Age Range	Married	Single	Divorce	Others	Total	Percentage
18 – 24	6	4	2	2	14	13.08411
25 – 30	10	6	2	2	20	12.98701
31 – 35	12	3	2	2	19	15.07937
36 – 40	13	1	2	1	17	18.08511
above 40	6	0	5	1	12	11.53846
Total	47	14	13	8		
Percentage	13.94659	11.2	20.63492	23.63636		

Source: Authors Survey, 2021

From the analysis in Table 7.0, most of the women still feel safe at home with the spouse during the COVID-19 lockdown period, with the highest percentage of 18 percent within the age range of 36-40 years feeling unsafe. This may be attributed to the fact that at this age most of them have children and attention is being diverted. Again most of them are working class couple into one business or the other and they felt they can actually be comfortable on their own. Aside this, an average age range between 18-35 still felt unsafe at home, attributed to the recent killing and domestic violence due to personal and social influence especially women at the age bracket between 18-35 and those above 40 years (Figure 9.0).

Figure 9.0. Percentage distribution of women with age range that felt not safe at home



4.5 Reason for Gender Based Violence during Covid-19 lockdown



From Table 8, 50 percent of the respondents attributed that gender violence is mostly cause due to financial issues during the COVID-19 lockdown. Most of the women opt out that when there are some financial challenges at home most of the time the man turned aggressive and such may lead to gender violence., explaining that since most of them earn little income or not even earning they depend mostly on the close partner who happen to take care of their needs during the lockdown. In such cases any issues of money end up mostly in arguing and most of the arguments eventually lead to gender violence. They were of the opinion that if they are not totally dependent on their close partners, chances of gender violence through financing issues will reduce tremendously. About 32 percentages attributed it to drunkenness and frustration respectively. Those that attributed the case to drunkenness explained that due to the lockdown, many of the men feel bored and find the nearest local beer parlour as a place to relax and while away broadness, in the process they may get drunk and this may eventually lead to domestic violence at home. 30 percent admitted that their close partner is either temperamental or having problem of intolerance, so when force to stay at home during the lock down he tends to exhibit some of these trends and often times get irritated these may lead to gender violence.

Table 8.0 Reasons for Gender Violence during COVID-19 period

Age Range	Finance	Drunkenness	Temper	Frustration	Total	Percentage
18 – 24	15	12	1	1	29	27.1028
25 – 30	40	12	4	6	62	40.25974
31 – 35	52	10	1	2	65	51.5873
36 – 40	30	4	7	3	44	46.80851
above 40	32	2	6	3	43	41.34615
Total	169	40	19	15		
Percentage	50.14837	32	30.15873	34.54545		

Source: Authors Survey, 2021

Gender violence is not new in the world, but there are so many factors that cause increases in such acts within the society. The findings from the research indicates that out of the 337 married women, 128 (about 37 percent) experience verbal abuses or are denied basics resources during lockdown compared to when there was no lockdown. Most of the women are in their early and mid-stage of marriage and fall within the age of 30 and above. It is also reveals that divorcee women experience highest rate of denial to communication during this period making them suffer more isolation and neglect. Sexual harassment is high among women within the age group of 18-24. About 2 in 3 women experience one form of sexual harassment during the period. From the study, sexual harassment decreases with age with 1 out of 5 women above 40 years experience sexual harassment during this period. The study also reveals that 1 out of 3 women are physical abuse from their male counterpart. However most of the married women

still feel safe and protected at home. During the lockdown, most of the women attribute the main cause of violence to financial issues, drunkenness and frustrations.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Gender equality is a core value and desire of the world, but it is not yet a reality. The COVID-19 pandemic worsens the situation in multiple ways. Firstly, the incidence of gender-based violence has dramatically increased, mainly because the 'stay at home' measures and associated stress the pandemic has inflicted on the society. Secondly, among the different forms of gender based violence, verbal abuses, denial to basic resources and sexual harassment are the most common gender violence witness by so many women during the lock period especially among younger couples and girls. Also unaware of the danger of gender violence especially among intolerant men and fear of being isolated and due to traditional way of life, many of the women still feel safe staying with their partners during the period.

5.2 Recommendations

From the findings in this research, it is recommended that the government should strengthen legal measures to criminalize gender-based violence, ensuring equal opportunities and salaries in the labour market, and pushing gender-balance on corporate boards and women's participation in politics. It is also recommended that government should fix basic infrastructures like power supply to reduce frustration at home during future pandemic. Also proper awareness should be carried out on gender based violence and the resulting penalties associated with such acts as this may encourage women to report such incidents.

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