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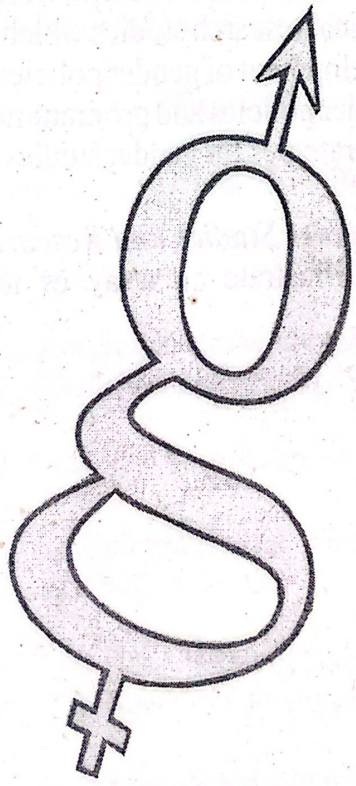
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International Journal of Gender Studies and Research

The Centre for Gender Studies, University of Benin, Benin City has among its objectives the promotion of:

- A gender sensitive university community and the fostering of gender equality and equity in all spheres of the society.
- Excellence in multi-disciplinary research and teaching of gender differentiation in all fields, leading to gender mainstreaming development of gender responsive curricula, good gender policy formulation dissemination, evaluation and monitoring, broadening of learning experiences by females and males for better future options.

In pursuance of its objectives, the Centre has floated the ***International Journal of Gender Studies and Research***, as an outlet of local and international scholarly publications in gender and related issues. The ***International Journal of Gender Studies and Research***, is a multi-disciplinary bi-annual Journal devoted to articles that address contemporary gender issues and is directed toward an audience that includes practitioners, policy makers, researchers scholars and students who are committed to the growth and development of gender studies. The editors welcome manuscripts that:

- ✞ develop theoretical, conceptual or methodological approaches to gender studies
- ✞ analyze issues of current interest to those who work in gender related areas
- ✞ present results of empirical research studies which are designed to enhance the understanding and development of gender policies
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The ***International Journal of Gender Studies and Research*** is therefore committed to the publication of manuscripts that illustrate an array of ideological and interdisciplinary perspectives in gender studies.

Prof. (Mrs.) E.U. Edosomwan
Editor-in-Chief

CENTRE FOR GENDER STUDIES JOURNAL

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THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN: DIMENSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, EXPLANATIONS AND CONTROL OF FEMALE INVOLVEMENT IN THE PERPETRATION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) refers to crimes targeting specific groups of people primarily on account of their being females or males. More often than not, such crimes are inflicted by the male against the female. Indeed, researches show that females are three to six times more likely to experience GBV than males. However, the fact that women also perpetrate violence against men is under-reported probably on account of its inconsistency with the cultural belief that men are the typically aggressive sex or that they should be able to defend themselves. However, to these authors' minds, the fact that females also perpetrate violence against men, at all, must not be taken lightly for a number of reasons. To start with, gender discourse is about male and female; violence against men is also a human- rights issue; and holistic response to the menace of GBV in any society can only be achieved when all perpetrators, whether male or female, are exposed and check-mated. The purpose of this paper therefore, is to highlight the dimensions of female involvement in GBV perpetration, interrogate its implication for victims' human rights, provide psycho-social explanations for the phenomenon, and explore the mediating role of Emotional Intelligence in stemming the tide of women involvement in GBV perpetration.

Introduction

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines violence as "physical force exerted for the purpose of violating, damaging, or abusing." Of particular interest to this paper, however, is the gender dimension of violence, i.e. Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Gender-Based Violence (GBV) refers to crimes targeting specific groups of people primarily on account of their being females or males. More often than not, such crimes are inflicted by the male against the female. Indeed, researches show that females are three to six times more likely to experience sexual abuse than males (Pickup, 2011). Although it could also be because male victimisation is under-reported on account of its inconsistency with the cultural belief that men should be able to defend themselves (Kaur & Sokhey, 2011) Consequently, the term GBV is generally conceptualised as violence directed against women and girls primarily because they are females; and used interchangeably with the term Violence against Women. In the same vein, discussions on violation of human rights have, over the years, been coined to be synonymous with violence against women and this has become a global malaise. It is common to see and hear about women being violated in different facets of life by their male counterparts, be it their fathers, brothers, husbands or, for that matter, total strangers (Nnadi, 2012).

Gender Based Violence practices like sexual harassment, trafficking in women and girls, sex selection, child marriage, female genital mutilation, widowhood practices, among others, are seen as fast becoming epidemics plaguing Nigeria as it is the case globally. Such dehumanising practices have not only elicited public outcry globally, they have also led the United Nations General Assembly, and its member-states, to institute a number of treaties, laws and policies to protect

women from violation of their human rights.

Human rights are basic rights and freedoms that all people are entitled to regardless of differences in status be it nationality, place of residence, sex, ethnic origin, colour, religion, or language. However, without denying the fact that there is prominence of violation of women's human rights, the fact that some women (here used interchangeably with the word female) also perpetrate GBV cannot be discountenanced. This explains why this Paper seeks to examine the flip side of perpetration of GBV. For instance, do women also violate the rights of others? This is a primary question, which agitated the minds of these authors and motivated this paper. To respond to this profound question, the paper highlights the dimensions of female involvement in GBV perpetration, interrogates its implications for victims' human rights; provides psycho-social explanations for the phenomenon, and explores the mediating role of Emotional Intelligence in stemming its tide in Nigeria.

Dimensions of Female Involvement in Gender-Based Violence

There exists ample evidence in literature that women also sometimes also violate the rights of other people in Nigeria and globally. Yet such cases remain grossly under-reported basically because violated men typically hide under the cover of the "powerful" being and silently bear the brunt of violence; while children victims tend to be too powerless to defend themselves or even speak out. Consequently, in recent times, there have been several cases of violence against men, women and children perpetrated by women, including domestic violence, trafficking in persons, sale and purchase of new born babies for ritual purposes, beating, murder, obnoxious widowhood practices etc. in different parts of the world.

In India, for instance, the Police reported that staff, including women, at Palash Hospital were selling babies for as little as 100,000 rupees (S$2,000) each, with agents convincing unmarried mothers to give birth at the facility and then abandon their infants (Prateek,2016). Similarly, Gulbert (2014) noted that in London, nearly three of every 10 convicted human traffickers worldwide are female, and that women play a big role in trafficking. In the same vein, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) attested to the fact that 28 percent of convicted traffickers between 2010 and 2012 were women, many of them acting as guards, recruiters and money collectors, to gain the trust of female victims. Specifically, more than 100 cases across 30 countries reportedly involved female traffickers who had worked with their husbands, mothers, daughters or siblings to traffic victims, mainly for sexual exploitation and forced labour.

Perhaps more alarming is dimension of female involvement in GBV in Nigeria. For example, in spite of the provision in Section 33 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that everyone has an inviolable right to life, some women have been found to be violators of the right to life of other people- men, women and even children. For example, Ameh (2016), reported that a mother of two and wife of a lecturer in the Theatre Arts Department of the College of Education Oju in Benue State confessed to the Police under interrogation of the murder of her husband by herself and her siblings, for cheating on her and that she dumped his remains in River Katsina-Ala. Also, in Kaduna, according to Dachen (2015), a 40-year-old mother of five, Mary Luka, allegedly beat her husband to death in Gonin-Gora village of Cikun Local Government Area because he came back home late despite her several warnings. In Lagos, Ikeke (2014) reported that a 38-year-old woman, Janet Fagbadebo, was arrested for killing her husband, Kehinde Fagbadebo in Okorodu area of Lagos during an argument over money and infidelity. Similarly, a Legal Practitioner in Ibadan, Yewande Fatoki-Oyediran, murdered her husband, Oyelowo Oyediran on suspicion of infidelity (Sahara Reporters, 2016).

Female perpetration of GBV in Nigeria, is not limited to domestic violence but also extends to other

members of the society, including neighbours. For example in Benue State, Duru (2016), reported that a 22-year-old nursing mother, Nwuese Ayom, stabbed her neighbour, Tererse Ayua, to death in Gboko town for teasing her over the baby she had about four months earlier.

Neither is female perpetration of GBV limited to murder. Some women have also been involved in the sale of new born babies and human trafficking, especially young girls, for money and other forms of abuse. For instance, Ogwuda (2013), reported that a middle- aged woman who ran an illegal maternity centre at a camp in Oduke in Delta State specialized in luring pregnant teenage girls eager to deliver their babies under cover and selling the newborns to ritualists or childless couples for between N400,000 and N500,000, depending on the sex of the babies; a 24 year-old woman was docked for sexually molesting a 5-year-old girl in her residence in Lagos (ScanNews Nigeria,2016); in March 2016, a retired soldier sought divorce from his wife of 20years over complaints of constant rape and beating by her in Lagos (http://youngamebo.com/2016/03/_; and on the 25th of June,2016, a wife beat her lecturer husband to death over allegation of extra marital affairs (Vanguard online, Sunday, 2016). There is no contesting the fact that such acts of violence have dire implications for victims' human rights.

Human Rights Implications of Female Involvement in GBV

Violation of human rights is a serious offence under the Nigeria constitution, and its implications also grave. For instance, human rights violations can trigger a cascade of psychological, physical and interpersonal problems for victims that can, in turn, influence the functioning of the surrounding social system. This explains why Universal human rights are often expressed and guaranteed by law, in the forms of treaties, customary international law, general principles and other sources of international law. The inalienability of human rights means, they should not be taken away, except in specific situations and according to due process. For example, the right to liberty may be restricted only if a person is found guilty of a crime by a court of law. In Nigeria, for instance, Chapter IV (Section 33-44) of the1999 Constitution enumerates fundamental rights of Nigerians to include: "Rights to life, dignity of human person, personal liberty, private and family life, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, freedom of movement, freedom from discrimination and right to acquire and own immovable property anywhere in Nigeria." Despite such provisions, however, it is no longer news that women and men both often violate other peoples' human rights.

For instance, obnoxious widowhood practices, more often perpetrated by women, especially among the Igbos and the Yorubas (such as hair shaving, sleeping with the corpse of a husband in a lock-up room for certain period of time, being refrained from bathing for a number of days etc.), typify gross human rights abuse and can be described as "inhuman or degrading treatment" (Olowokere, Dickson-Olorunda &Nwufo, 2015).

Another form of violation of dignity of the human person and the right to freedom of movement perpetrated by women is human trafficking. Afam (2012) reported that trafficking of girls and women from Nigeria is especially well organized and centres on a female-figure called "Mama" or "Madam". The Federal Bureau of Investigation (2006) reported that the rights of victims of trafficking are controlled in many different ways: physically, through beatings, burnings, rapes and starvation; emotionally, through isolation, psychological abuse, and financially, through debt bondage and threat of deportation. All these despite vigorous campaigns against human rights abuse and prosecution of arrested perpetrators in Nigeria. What explanations can then be provided for such behaviour? This paper provides a bio-psycho-social analysis to understanding why anyone, male or female, may engage in GBV.

Bio-psycho-social Explanations of Female Perpetration of GBV

Common to every form of violence is aggression typically associated with the emotion of anger, fear or greed. Uncontrolled anger /greed or unresolved fear tends to produce aggression which, if unchecked, may culminate in violence. Three integrated explanations, biological, psychological and sociological, for understanding why people may engage in violence are here interrogated.

Biological Basis of Violence: In his psychoanalysis theory, Sigmund Freud identified two opposing instincts as fundamental motivators of human behaviours- the life and death instincts (Freud, 1920). From this theoretical perspective, the life instinct (Eros) propels man to act in ways that could enhance the preservation of own life and ensure the continuation of the species; while the death instinct (Thanatos) pushes man towards extinction. The life and death instincts both propel man to act in seemingly opposing but actually complementary manners. In response to the life instinct (Eros), for instance, man's behaviours are directed at meeting the basic needs for health, safety and sustenance (to preserve life) as well as sexual gratification (to create life). On the other hand, the fear of disintegration and death, activated by the death instinct (Thanatos), propels man to do anything to preserve his own life even if it involves destroying others. In Freud's view, when this energy is directed outward onto others, it is expressed as aggression and violence (Cherry, 2013). From the psychoanalytical perspective, therefore, violence is strongly linked with the death instinct. It can thus be assumed that one plausible explanation for female involvement in aggression, bullying, abuse, or any other form of GBV is in response to the fear of disintegration and death, a genetic disposition that is apparently 'beyond their control' often explained by GBV perpetrators as self defence. From this perspective, it can be concluded that aggression is a natural and spontaneous behaviour of all human beings. So how come not all women perpetrate GBV? It must mean that the death instinct does not have compelling control over human behaviours after all, and that there must be something in the personality of violent women which sets them apart from the rest of the population. Consequently, our quest for understanding female perpetration in GBV must include an exploration of the psychological basis of GBV

Psychological Basis of GBV: Although it must be admitted that sometimes women perpetrate GBV in self defence, Personality psychologists argue that a number of characteristics predispose people to engage in violence. For instance, women prone to GBV perpetration tend to be hot-tempered, anxious, fearful, jealous, and morally lax. Archer (2006), describes such individuals as generally impulsive, risk-taking and extraverted compared with non-violent individuals. However, such personality dispositions must combine with specific situations within the environment to trigger violence as genes rarely work in a vacuum (Whipps, 2009). Consequently, some women may perpetrate GBV in response to specific sociological triggers.

Sociological Basis of GBV : Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory and Pinker (2002) both underscore the fact that the environment has a decisive role to play either in curtailing or aggravating violence such that women with aggressive personality exposed to violence-inducing environmental influences stand the greater risk of perpetrating GBV. Specifically, women who as children were exposed to violent home and media experiences and /or who, as adults, constantly express anger and frequently employ shame or corporal punishment in dealing with children's misbehaviour have higher tendency to endorse violence as a problem solving strategy ; and increases their probability of becoming desensitised to violence later in life (Tremblay et al., 2004; **Huesmann**, Moise-Titus, & **Eron** 2003 and Ward,1970). Importantly, exposure to warped values in form of greed and insatiable desire for material acquisition, power and position, perceived or real threat to life or infidelity in marital relationships can increase the propensity for violence among women with violence-inclined personality. Fortunately, in spite of the myriad of such possible triggers of violence in the society, the generality of women are still capable of controlling their

specific environmental experiences without getting involved in GBV perpetration. One proven environmental factor in this regard is Emotional Intelligence

Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence in Female GBV Perpetration

Emotional Intelligence (EQ or EI) refers to the *ability to understand and control oneself as well as understand and relate with others competently.* EQ as the ability to be aware of one's own feelings, aware of others' feelings, differentiate among them, and use the information to guide one's thinking and behaviour (*Goleman, 1998;* Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

As earlier identified in this paper, the root cause of GBV is either anger or greed. Accurate awareness and active management of manifestation of either emotion can drastically control its degeneration into violence-and this is where Emotional Intelligence competence comes in.

Emotional situations trigger physical reactions in the entire body but *EQ boosts the capacity to recognise a negative emotion; reflectively respond to the situation precipitating it and actively work at modifying such a negative emotion. There is ample evidence in literature that* individuals with such capacity for self regulation are more competent at controlling their own behaviours and are consequently able to suppress disruptive tendencies typically displayed in GBV perpetration (Olasehinde-Williams, 2012; Eniola, 2007).

Importantly, what sets emotionally intelligent individuals apart from less-endowed others is the degree of concern they have for themselves and for others. Emotionally intelligent individuals are high in the degree of concern they have for themselves and for others ; and consequently have the capacity to employ their emotions for better decision making. It can thus be assumed that emotionally intelligent women would be sensitive to other people's emotions; accord others positive regard; be patient in moments of anger; discuss and resolve difficult interactions; be less reactive but more responsive to provocations; and be willing to see things from others' points of view. Expectedly therefore, such women should be less prone to GBV perpetration as they are more likely to treat others as they would like to be treated (Tsirigotis and Luczak, 2016).

Conversely, women low on emotional intelligence typically show high concern for themselves but low concern for others. Consequently, they tend **to** adopt the single, most convenient and most self-serving reaction strategy and generally lack empathy for victims' feelings or situations (Rahim and Alves, 2002). Such women **are** typically glued to their own points of view, given to frequent mood swings, tend to resort to addictive behaviours (i.e. drug and alcohol) to sooth their emotions (Baggini and Macaro, 2013) and consequently more likely to engage in disruptive behaviours including GBV perpetration. On account of its potential to control violent tendency therefore, there is every need to boost the EQ status of women given to GBV perpetration.

Control of Female Involvement in GBV Perpetration

As established in this paper, genes do not work in a vacuum. Violence-prone personality, for instance, requires appropriate environment for full expression of the tendency. If the degree of female involvement in GBV currently pervading our society must be reversed therefore, attention must be paid to modifying predisposing situations within the environment. *The thesis sponsored in this paper is that* managing such emotions intelligently is one important life skill required by all, but especially by women prone to GBV perpetration. Pragmatic initiatives to this end are here proposed.

1. Consistent with the principles of Gender discourse, both male and female life experiences must be put in perspective, in GBV conversations. Specifically, Gender discourse must be concerned about how GBV impact both sexes as perpetrators and as victims. Therefore, focus must be on developing the capacity of both sexes to control *the painful emotion of*

anger, and resist the tempting emotion of greed.

2 One implication of this is that Emotional Intelligence must be mainstreamed into the school curriculum at least as a required course at every stratum of the nation's education system in order to develop students' capacity to become more competent managers of violence-prone emotions. Indeed, EQ training should be an integral part of any Gender Studies curriculum; and importantly, Gender scholars should initiate periodic workshops focused at building the Emotional Intelligence status as well as enhancing the Human rights knowledge, attitude and behaviours of women, men, girls and boys.

3 Aggressive tendencies in children, male and female, should be prevented early in life by providing opportunities for them to learn appropriate anger control and management options. In particular, child-rearing practices which encourage children to fight back; employ violence in dealing with children's misbehaviours; direct anger towards children; or freely express anger around children must be avoided to prevent children from endorsing violence as a viable means of expressing anger.

4. In like manner, the school must also model and directly teach appropriate anger management techniques. More importantly, children should be exposed to adequate life skills training, especially sex education, assertiveness training and basic human rights education both at home and at school to develop their EQ level, develop their human rights knowledge and enhance their capacity for informed procedures for self protection against any perceived form of human rights abuse.

5. Another preventive strategy is mass advocacy to sensitize Nigerians about their rights under the Constitution. Government should provide human rights education to the citizens through media, workshop, and as part of academic curriculum at every stratum of the education system in order to educate the citizens and students about their rights and how to seek redress when their rights are abused.

6. Such preventive measures notwithstanding, there would still be some women who may be pathologically violent. It will therefore be important to protect the general public from such perpetration of GBV by putting adequate security measures in place. Adequate patrol of all borders to check-mate human trafficking, periodic combing of communities for suspicious maternity centres to check-mate abortion and baby selling; free hot line access to police /medical help lines and well equipped security for rapid response to distress calls from victims are some protective measures with potential to curtail violence in the society.

7. Notable institutions established to protect peoples human rights in Nigeria, include the National Human Rights Commission, Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Human Right Education. To give effectiveness to the work of these institutions, there is a need for the penalties issued against violation of human rights to be sufficiently aversive, consistent and objective so as to serve as deterrent to other would-be violators of citizens' rights.

Summary and Conclusion

Uncontrolled anger and greed tend to produce aggression which, if unchecked, may culminate in GBV. Anger is one of the basic emotions present at birth. However, there is ample evidence in literature to confirm that the genetic factors of this emotion interact with environmental influences to determine people's propensity for GBV perpetration (Bjorklund & Pellegrini, 2002). One environmental factor with high potential to mediate emotional reactions is Emotional Intelligence.

Women with high EQ status are less likely to perpetrate GBV because they have the capacity to generate and endorse positive conflict resolution options and show empathy (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004). It can thus be safely concluded that, Emotional Intelligence and human rights knowledge, attitude and skills training is critical in stemming the current tide of female involvement in GBV perpetration in Nigeria.

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