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THE MEDIA, COVID-19 AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines Media's role during the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on gender-based violence in Nigeria. The paper clarifies the concept of Media, Covid-19 and GBV. The paper discussed media coverage of GVB in Nigeria at the peak of the pandemic in the year 2020. The paper further discussed the salient barriers to media reportage in the country and responses to gender-based violence in Nigeria where the paper examined the responses of government, non-governmental organisation and religious bodies on gender-based violence in the country. The study further proffered recommendations as to lessening the effect of GBV especially during lockdowns and pandemic in Nigeria.

Keywords: COVID 19, Gender Based Violence, Media Coverage, Nigeria.

Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a public health menace that is highly prevalent across the globe. It consists of sexual abuse, child marriage, female genital mutilation, physical abuse, psychological abuse, and social media-based violence. According to the World Health Organization, around 1 in every 3 women globally has been subjected to either sexual or physical assault in their lifetime and some of the factors that predispose women to GBV are lack of education, male privilege, cultural and attitudinal constrains and societal relegation of women (Wada et al. 2022). Similar statistics have been reported in Nigeria, where around 1 in every 3 females between ages 15 and 49 were revealed to have been subjected to sexual assault. Other local surveys have reported a higher prevalence of GBV ranging from 42.3% to 89%, with psychological violence reported to be the most prevalent form of GBV (Wada et al. 2022). Although there are cases of men experiencing some forms of GBV, women are disproportionately affected. Women and girls have been identified to be even more vulnerable to GBV during moments of social disruption and insecurity (Wada et al. 2022).

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A survey among thousands of internally displaced persons in Nigeria reported that around a third and a fifth had been subjected to sexual and physical violence, respectively, especially after their displacement which is orchestrated by crisis and violent conflict in parts of the Country. The COVID-19 pandemic has been reported to have ripple effects on GBV, particularly in areas where insecurity and social inequality are persistent (Irene, Oseremen 2015). Due to the social construct in countries like Nigeria, women and girls are more susceptible to the economic impact of the pandemic, thereby making them more susceptible to GBV during the pandemic. In a media reportage in Borno State, it was noted that the pandemic had adversely affected the livelihoods of more women (71%) compared to men (51%). This was because the informal sector majorly comprises female workers and during the pandemic, most of the informal work sphere were closed due to lockdown restrictions (Saha and Dutta 2020). Within two weeks after the COVID-19 lockdown was enacted in Nigeria, there was a 56% increase in cases of GBV. In Lagos State, there was a three-fold increase in the cases of domestic and sexual violence reported via the hotlines within a month of the lockdown (Saha and Dutta 2020).

In other climes, the significant increase in the rate of GBV during the pandemic was also reported. For instance, in countries like Canada, UK, USA, China, Germany, and Argentina, which is why GBV during COVID-19 era was referred to as the Shadow Pandemic. Due to the unprecedented rise in the cases of GBV during the pandemic in Nigeria, the Government declared a State of Emergency on rape and GBV. However, to effectively tackle this menace, it is important to assess the most prevalent forms of GBV and the available community structures designed to curb the menace in the country (Saha and Dutta 2020). This research is an attempt therefore, to investigate media coverage of Covid-19 and the responses of government towards GBV during the pandemic.

Conceptual Clarifications

Media: Media is the reflection of our society and it depicts what and how society works. Media, either it is printed, electronic or the web is the only medium, which helps in making people informed. It also helps in entertaining the public, educate and make people aware of the current happenings. Media has today become the voice of our society. There is a variety of media platform that has stimulated the thoughts of the young generation and other sections of our society, more eloquently (Singh and Nity, 2017). Media and society are closely related to each other. The extensive impact of media on society can easily be seen these days. Media reflects our society, how it works and what it constitutes. With the advancement in technological area, our society has also observed the expansion in the thoughts and ideas of people. Every single invention starting from the printing press to the latest smartphones our society has accepted it. Earlier people used to communicate things with the help of sketch and print forms but as time passes the medium became more advanced (Singh and Nity, 2017).

Not only this, novel events and happening are also captured by the media in its bid to relate happenings and communicate in various forms to the people especially, the fifth estate of the realm. Today people are just a click away from any and every information that is available on the internet. There are various forms of media that help to inform, educate and entertain our society. Media can be in print form that is through newspapers, books, magazines etc. Media includes an electronic form for spreading information which is one of the most used media of mass communication. With the help of radio and TV, listeners and viewers not only get updated but it also creates an understanding of current happenings (Singh and Nity, 2017).

Radio being an audio medium helps in disseminating information to every nook and corner of our country. Radio has also played a vital role in creating a platform for imagination. The reach of this audio medium is not only limited to urban areas but it has covered a wide range even to the remote areas of our country. The people living in rural parts of the country are getting more benefits from the audio medium of mass communication. The programs on radio cater the interest of rural section which constitutes small-scale industries, farming, forestry, fisheries etc. which has helped the rural people in their day to day life matters. On the other hand, TV is the second most used medium in terms of reach. Visuals and audio when combined together help in better understanding and provides up-to-date information. News from all parts of the country is investigated and presented through this medium of mass communication (Leist, 2013).

Social media has brought different people from the different geographical area on one platform on which they can share their feeling, ideas, emotions, information and much more. The manifold social networking sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google +, and others open the door to share ideas, views, and thoughts on the same platform. With the advancement of science and technology, the world has come close to each other. Today people don't have to wait for the dissemination process but the condition is such that every social media user has become a source of information on their own (Leist, 2013).

COVID-19: The coronavirus disease 19 (COVID-19) is a highly transmittable and pathogenic viral infection caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which caused global pandemic that led to a dramatic loss of human life worldwide. Genomic analysis revealed that SARS-CoV-2 is phylogenetically related to severe acute respiratory syndrome-like (SARS-like) bat viruses, therefore bats could be the possible primary reservoir. The intermediate source of origin and transfer to humans is not known, however, the rapid human to human transfer has been confirmed widely. There is no clinically approved antiviral drug or vaccine available to be used against COVID-19. However, few broad-spectrum antiviral drugs have been evaluated against COVID-19 in clinical trials, resulted in clinical recovery. In the current review, we summarize and comparatively analyze the emergence and pathogenicity of COVID-19 infection and previous human coronaviruses including severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV) and middle east respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV). We also discuss the approaches for developing effective vaccines and therapeutic combinations to cope with this viral outbreak (Shereen, et al. 2020).

GBV: Gender-based violence against women has been defined as “any act that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life” (WHO, 2014). This definition, which emerged from the 1995 United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing, represents an international consensus on how to conceptualize the dynamics of gender-based violence and encompasses child sexual abuse, coercive sex, rape, stalking, and intimate partner violence. The term “gender-based” is used because such violence is shaped by gender roles and status in society. Gender-based violence against women does not encompass every violent act a woman may happen to experience (being threatened by a weapon during a robbery, for example). A complex mix of gender-related cultural values, beliefs, norms, and social institutions implicitly and even

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explicitly have supported intimate partner violence and provided little recourse for its victims (WHO, 2019). In particular, gender roles and expectations, male entitlement, sexual objectification, and discrepancies in power and status have legitimized, rendered invisible, sexualized, and helped to perpetuate violence against women.

Media Coverage of GVB in Nigeria during the Pandemic

The mass media are the various avenues through which information is collected, collated, and disseminated to individuals and groups of people in diverse locations. Some of the popular ones are newspapers, magazines, television, radio, film, book, billboards, social media platforms etcetera. The fact that they are made up of many variants, makes it possible for varied ideas about social issues to be discussed and analyzed. They are very important to the society vis-a-vis the roles they play which include creating awareness, dissemination of news, agenda-setting, advertising, and education in a democratic dispensation. This is in line with the thought of Jammy Guanah (2021), who observes that the Nigerian mass media, like in other parts of the world, is seen as the fourth estate of the realm, coming after the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary, with this, the mass media are saddled with enormous responsibilities in the society.

Though, the vital roles they play are sometimes not appreciated enough especially when such roles are considered to be short of their expectations, considering the potency of the media; for instance, not amplifying the cases of violence women face daily. The media can put a human face to the stories about abused women/girls and assure them that they will get help and justice from the appropriate quarters. Even though, while calling for a change of focus by the media, Hashim Suleiman observes that what permeates the current scholarship about media and gender is all about the negativities that media do to the female gender, yet the media cannot be exonerated when it comes to how it reports the female gender stories (Guanah, 2021).

The media are expected to educate citizens about gender issues in society regularly as part of their civic obligation, and bring to the knowledge of the public any time there are cases of gender discrimination. Hence, Andrew Campbell submits that expanding community partnerships and spreading awareness about the importance of reporting incidents of abuse are crucial to reducing the number of such cases. Thus, it will not be out of place if the media engage in investigative journalism by engaging GBV victims during the lockdowns to unearth the causes of the abuse they experienced. Media can successfully be used to mobilize the male gender to achieve a healthier and equal relationship to prevent an increase in GBV cases. It is expected that newspapers and other media outlet should report more about the danger women/girls are exposed to when violated, and such reports should be perpetual until the abuse against them is stopped, or drastically reduced (Guanah, 2021).

Nigeria and the world have been facing a GBV crisis, deeply rooted in harmful patriarchal social, cultural, traditional and religious norms. However, this crisis has been elevated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with widespread evidence that GBV has sharply increased since the beginning of the pandemic. For example, police reports of domestic violence in China were three times higher in February 2020 compared to reports from the previous year. In Argentina, Canada, France, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States, government authorities, women's rights activists and civil society partners flagged reports of increased domestic violence during the crisis and heightened demand for emergency shelter (Fawole, 2005).

The situation in Nigeria reflects the global trend of increased gender-based violence. GBV is reported to have significantly increased since the lockdown began in the three most affected areas (Lagos State, FCT and Ogun State) on 30 March 2020. The Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team reported a three-fold increase in the number of telephone calls received through their hotlines in one month. In particular, service providers have reported sharp increases in cases of intimate partner violence and domestic violence (Fawole, 2005). Other states have implemented similar lockdown measures, resulting in increased incidence of GBV. Data shows a general increase in GBV across all six geopolitical zones (Table 1), and service providers have reported sharp increases in cases of intimate partner violence and domestic violence. Data on reported incidents of GBV cases in Nigeria based on preliminary information from 24 states shows that in March, the total number of GBV incidents reported were 346, while in the first part of April, incident reports spiked to 794, depicting a 56 per cent increase in just two weeks of lockdown (Fawole, 2005).

Some of these incidents of violence have tragically resulted in the death of victims, the rape of children, including incestual rape, and tenant–landlord assault. While federal and state governments put these measures in place to contain the spread of the virus, survivors of abuse have found themselves confined in their homes with abusers for weeks on end. Economic uncertainty, increased substance abuse, and changes to daily family lives as a result of the pandemic have also increased tensions within households, compounding violent situations (Guanah, 2021).

For women and girls who are subject to domestic violence, it is not merely a case of increased proximity to perpetrators, but also the decreased access to support networks and critical support services, both of which would otherwise serve to mitigate the magnitude and effects of the violence. During and following this critical period, it is of utmost importance that the lives of women and girls are safeguarded, and focus is maintained on the most vulnerable populations. As Nigeria begins to feel the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak's interactions with limited health-care infrastructure and multiple pre-existing inequalities and fragilities, the emergence of the Shadow Pandemic of GBV also threatens the health and well-being of already vulnerable women and girls. Due to pre-existing inequalities and vulnerabilities, groups of women and girls face heightened risks of experiencing GBV during the COVID-19 pandemic. These groups include refugees and internally displaced persons, women and girls living with disabilities, and informal workers (Guanah, 2021).

The media also contributed immensely in the reportage of GBV during the pandemic. The Media is the fourth estate of the realm and if not for the media, the salient cases of GBV recorded during then pandemic would not have been laid bare. Even though, the Media (both the print media and the mass media) is not without their obstacles in GBV related news reportage in the country, yet they were able to put out these salient incidences of GBV especially during the lockdown and at the height of the pandemic.

Table 1 below shows the number of media reported cases of gender-based violence in Nigeria by March and April 2020, cutting across states and geopolitical zones.

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Table 1: Number of Media reported cases of gender-based violence in Nigeria during March and April 2020 by state and geopolitical zone

Geopolitical Zone	State	Number of cases per state		Number of cases per geopolitical zone	
		March	April	March	April
North East	Adamawa	16	20	50	115
	Bauchi	9	30		
	Borno	6	26		
	Gombe	19	39		
North West	Kaduna	6	23	52	87
	Katsina	23	33		
	Sokoto	23	31		
North Central	Benue	30	52	67	156
	FCT	5	31		
	Nassarawa	5	20		
	Niger	2	8		
	Plateau	25	45		
South East	Abia	25	46	36	92
	Anambra	3	22		
	Ebonyi	5	2		
	Enugu	3	22		
South West	Ekiti	25	51	91	296
	Lagos	37	185		
	Ogun	18	22		
	Osun	3	18		
	Oyo	8	20		
South South	Cross	8	12	18	35
	River	10	23		
	Rivers				

Source: Federal and State Ministries of Women Affairs

Barriers to Reportage of Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria

The UN Women report indicated that less than 40% of women who experience violence report it or seek support. Given the widespread and growing prevalence of GBV in Nigeria, the menace is becoming well reported, whether formally or informally. Although in many cultures and religious settings in Nigeria, cases of GBV are still shrouded in doubts, as perpetrators are either protected or the victims, out of fear of stigmatization, choose to remain silent over abusive exposures. Unless cases of abuse are adequately reported, ensuring that the practice is curbed will be difficult. Even when victims may want to report such cases, the social context or prevailing environment significantly contributes to the poor reportage of GBV. Hence, the religious, cultural, and political environment affects how victims respond to GBV.

Religious Barriers: Religion preaches the culture of patience and forgiveness. Religion also teaches that God is the only avenger of sin and no sinner will go free without being punished by God. These beliefs have culminated in the failure of some GBV victims to report their cases to appropriate authorities.

Social Stigmatization: Studies have shown that one of the factors that discourage victims from reporting cases and other violations of human rights is the social embarrassment it brings to them and their families. Incidences of GBV are hardly reported due to stigmatization. The social stigma and castigations that accompany reportage of GBV by societal members pose as a discouragement to many victims, who hide the violence they experience in the cloak of silence.

Cultural Barriers: In some climes the community believes that a particular gender causes GBV especially the women or girls who are often seen as the cause of sexual violence. They are often blamed to the extent that the family and community may reject and abandon such female victims. Women and girls for instance are expected to exercise caution by limiting their movement and their relationship with men to prevent males from assaulting them as it is believed that men usually have a high urge for sex and when they are tempted, they might not be able to control themselves. This existing cultural notion often discourages victims from reporting when abused. Furthermore, the need to protect the family's name by preventing it from social embarrassment often discourages victims from reporting cases of abuse talk more of taking the abuse to social media platforms. This implies that the priority to protect the family name reduces the importance of seeking justice and protecting the woman or girl-child from GBV (Heise, 1998).

Responses to Gender Based Violence in Nigeria

Government

In line with international conventions and charters, several legislative measures have been promulgated and implemented in several countries to protect the sexual rights of women and girls globally. The Nigerian constitution, the Criminal Code Act, Violence against Persons Prohibition Act, and the National Gender Policy contain protective clauses against GBV. The government's stance and efforts towards curbing the menace of SGBV in terms of prohibiting laws and punitive measures are outlined (Savage-Oyekunle and Annelize, 2015). The persistent abuse against women and girls is a global concern that has led to international efforts to curtail the menace. Formulation of global norms and standards that protect the right of women and girls form part of the efforts of the global governments. These global norms and standards are sets of social constructions that serve as strategic intents towards ending GBV. One of the global declarations that protect the rights of women and girls is the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. The convention supported an international bill that describes the rights of women (Savage-Oyekunle and Annelize, 2015). The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights also recognizes violence against women as a human rights violation and canvassed for the appointment of the special rapporteur on violence against women in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (Savage-Oyekunle and Annelize, 2015).

This declaration was the first international instrument that explicitly addresses violence against women providing a framework that regional, national, and local authorities can key into to end violence against women and girls. Similarly, the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action also provided a framework for governments across all levels to respond to violence against women and girls. The Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination addresses all forms of human rights violations and women's basic rights of equality. All these conventions were signed and ratified by the Nigerian government in furtherance of the prevention against GBV (Fayokun, 2015).

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Nigeria is a signatory to the international conventions against GBV. Nigeria ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1985 and the Nigerian 1999 constitution also prohibits discrimination against sexual offenses. Several laws have also been formulated to protect women from violations of their rights in Nigeria. One of such laws is section 357 of the Criminal Code Act, CAP 77, LFN, (1990), which states that “Any person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl, without her consent, or with her consent, if the consent is obtained by force or using false threats or intimidation of any kind, or by fear of harm, or employing false or fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act, or in the case of a married woman, by impersonating her husband, is guilty of an offense called rape” (Fayokun, 2015). The law criminalizes rape and provides penalties for jail terms. Women and girls are also protected under the Violence against Person Prohibition Act, (2015), which prohibits female genital mutilation, female circumcision, forced ejection from home, and harmful widowhood practices and battery.

The Violence against Persons Prohibition Act was passed into law in 2015, prohibits among others, violence against women and girls (Azubike, and Olayinka. 2015). The right of women and girls is also protected under National Gender Policy in Nigeria. The goal of the policy is to integrate women into national development and remove all forms of discrimination against women and girls in Nigeria (Roberts, 2000). Some states in Nigeria have also formulated strict laws against GBV especially rape to curb its surge within their territories. Prohibiting laws exist in states like Lagos, Cross River, Ebonyi, Jigawa while Enugu, Bayelsa Edo, and Delta States have also enacted laws against female genital mutilation (Roberts, 2000).

Ngo

Any social development problem, like gender related one, is a complex process, and therefore a multi-lateral stakeholder solution is required to address such issues in order to attain long term sustainability. NGOs, also termed, non-profit, voluntary, independent, civil society or citizen organizations function alongside government and profit based enterprise in the delivery of social services for the well-being of the society and are therefore referred to as the third sector (Ekhaton, 2019). NGOs evolve from experiences, interests, ideas and innate zeal to respond to or remedy the observed phenomena or desire in the society. NGOs could be international, national, regional, or community based depending on its financial resources and networking capability, and the goals behind its formation. They perform their roles through collaboration and partnership with donor organisation and networking with other NGOs (ibid). The NGOs have been described as one of the most significant forces in the field of development assistance (Eze-Anaba, 2007).

NGOs can represent specific local and international groups with concerns as diverse as providing emergency relief, protecting child health, increasing food production, promoting women right, alleviating poverty, protecting the environment, and providing rural credit to small farmers and local businesses. NGOs build roads, houses, hospitals and schools. NGOs work in family planning clinics and refugee camps and they teach in schools and universities and conduct research on increasing farm yields (Olsson, 2012). NGOs include religious groups, private foundations and charities, research organizations, and federations of dedicated doctors, nurses, engineers, agricultural scientists, and economist. (ibid). Increasingly, indigenous NGOs is recognized in playing leading roles in development interventions in African societies (Olsson, 2012).

The NGOs have created impacts that reveal the relevance of their partnership, especially as regards the participatory approach to community development; it is reported for example, that the Zimbabwe agricultural success in recent years is attributed to the strong initiative of the local farmers' organizations; also, is the Kenya self-help movement (Olsson, 2012). In Tanzania, extensive CSO lobbying resulted in the abolition of primary school fees at primary school level. Nigeria records a leading number of NGOs involved in developmental pursuit. This is regarded as a positive indication towards poverty alleviation. NGOs can help mobilize resources beyond the state budget for the purpose of development interventions (Olsson, 2012). Daniel states that NGOs have certain important advantages, they are less constrained by political imperatives; by working directly with the local people, they are able to avoid the suspicion and cynicism on the part of the poor concerning the sincerity of their projects; and whereas NGOs rely on independent voluntary efforts and influence to promote their values government would rely on authority to achieve outcomes (Eze-Anaba, 2007). NGOs depend on both government and foreign aid to function, gender-based NGOs inclusive. When writing on some roles NGOs have played in development related issues, remarked on the genuineness of the missions of NGOs. A study such as this brings to light how committed an NGO is to its established objectives, and what are the cost-benefits of continued giving of aid (Eze-Anaba, 2007).

There is a growing appreciation within the development community of the merits of conducting evaluation, purposely to know what works; what does not work and the reason why it does not work, for proper accountability and knowledge sharing. Therefore, emphasis has shifted from just projects and program implementation to results and outcome evaluation and so it is reasonable to expect recipient organizations like NGOs to have appropriate accountability and transparency measures. Conducting a study on an NGO can serve as an external evaluation of reported impacts on the target community (Eze-Anaba, 2007).

Religious Bodies

Although, religion in Nigeria has been seen as also contributing to creating an environment that breeds GBV. People often hide under the guise of culture and religion to justify acts of intimate partner violence. One can hear people making statements like "it is our culture", "the African culture allows it", "the Bible says a woman should be submissive, and if she is not, she should be beaten", "a foolish woman breaks her home" and so on (Balogun, 2021). Religion is an immaterial aspect of culture, immaterial because it is intangible but exists to shape human behaviour and social relationships that exist among members of the society. Religious values serve as a great force in the symbolic and subjective sphere, and the assumed inferiority of women is sometimes enabled by religion in the form of symbolic violence which is further enforced through social representations (Balogun, 2021).

According to Akangbe, religious institutions often appeal to battered women to continue to endure and stay in abusive relationships and try to be better wives, learn to forgive and forget, this they claim send a subtle message to perpetrators of intimate partner violence that their efforts to control their wives or girlfriends are justified because they experience first-hand the admonition for women to be submissive. Religion also teaches and infers that women are weaker vessels and play second fiddle in the marriage partnership, since the woman is taught to be subservient to the man; she accepts violence as part of her obedient obligation to her husband (Folaranmi, 1994).

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Christian women in abusive relationships for instance find it harder to divorce their abusive partners as compared to non-Christian women because the Christian woman sees marriage as “made sacred by God”. Leaving such a relationship causes feelings of guilt within the woman (Folaranmi, 1994). Revolting or resisting such harsh treatments is seen as disrespectful or even ungodly. Hence, women in abusive relationships, in their interpretation of religious beliefs that expect submissions to their spouses from them, continue to endure harsh and violent treatments from their husbands as a form of submission.

On the contrary also, especially in moder times, religion bodies/Associations such as CAN and even the Jammatul Nasril Islam JNI in their various outreaches to town cities and villages, even in some nook and crannies of villages in the country has always preached against violence, molestations, especially, gender-based violence. The two most practiced religions in Nigeria are Islam and Christianity and the crux of their preaching in love for one another and promotion of good neighborliness, fostering peaceful coexistence and people from different sections and even different sex. But most importantly, the distinguishing of the rights of the males and female gender (which forms part of the admonition offered) especially, to married couples who are susceptible to GBV.

Again, in their various sessions of preaching and sermon in mosques, churches of places of congregation, their reminder has always focused on the need for peace and deviating from acts that could endanger state or plunge a state into anarchy. They condemn terrorism and terrorist’s activities, most at times leading to GBV meted on women and children most often, in terrorist camps. They preached against domestic violence and the essence of peaceful coexistence with one another regardless of the religious, tribal and ethnic divide.

Recommendation

The Pandemic of GBV in Nigeria has amplified the many limitations of GBV prevention and response interventions prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. Similarly, the Nigerian Government and key stakeholders are presented with an opportunity to build more effective, transparent and inclusive GBV prevention and response interventions. These they can achieve through the following means:

- **Strengthening access to justice:** The COVID-19 pandemic poses extreme threats and challenges to effectively ensure justice and maintain accountability mechanisms for survivors of GBV. Policy responses to GBV must ensure the ability of the justice system and law enforcement to act as mechanisms of accountability, leverage opportunities to create a more transparent justice system, and use technological innovations to protect the rights of women and girls.
- **Enhancing data collection:** The rise in GBV amid the COVID-19 pandemic has created an incentive for government, donor and civil society organization stakeholders to strengthen collaboration to develop and roll out a system for centralized data collection and management on GBV.
- **Increasing investment in service providers:** The rise in GBV reveals the critical role that GBV and sexual and reproductive health service providers play in ensuring the health, well-being and protection of some of the most vulnerable members of society. The expanded needs of survivors will also likely continue to increase in the immediate aftermath of the crisis.

- **Amplifying the role of women leaders and women-led organizations:** The need to scale up community education on COVID-19 presents an opportunity to integrate community education with GBV awareness and ensure that women's networks play key roles in community awareness and sensitization. Leveraging these networks and platforms will also serve to amplify women's voices and strengthen women's leadership on eliminating violence against women and girls in the immediate response and in long-term recovery phases.
- **Advocacy for implementation of frameworks and passage of key legislation:** The focus and attention on the rise of GBV in Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic and on the prevention and response mechanisms provides a key opportunity for stakeholders to advocate for the adoption and implementation of national and state strategic frameworks on GBV and on the domestication of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act across all states (Bueno de Mesquita, 2021).

Conclusion

This paper examined Media's role during the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on gender-based violence in Nigeria. The paper clarifies the concept of Media, Covid-19 and GBV. The paper discussed media coverage of GVB in Nigeria at the peak of the pandemic in the year 2020. The paper further discussed the salient barriers to media reportage in the country and responses to gender-based violence in Nigeria where the paper examined the responses of government, non-governmental organisation and religious bodies on gender-based violence in the country. The study further proffered recommendations as to lessening the effect of GBV especially during lockdowns and pandemic in Nigeria.

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