

Domestic Violence: 26 women killed, five disfigured in four months



Success Izeke... killed while pregnant.

•Nigerians need more sensitization on it- Eze-Anaba

By Efe Onodjao

Behind closed doors, violence is growing in relationships. Abuse is turning into deadly fights, with some instances tragically leading to the untimely death of one or both partners. Alarming, statistics reveal that women are disproportionately affected, suffering a higher rate of fatal outcomes compared to their male counterparts.

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In January 2025 alone, there were four reported femicide cases, while five other women were disfigured. Between October and December 2024, 23 Nigerian women were sent to their early graves by their lovers. This figure was retrieved from reported cases in different media outlets.

Housewife set ablaze

One of the January incidents occurred on Tuesday, January 21, 2025, after a middle-aged man, Sunday Nwana, reportedly set his wife, Chioma Nwana, ablaze over allegations of infidelity, in Eziezewe community, Abagana, in the Njikoka Local Government Area of Anambra State. Chioma, who sustained severe burns, was rushed to a nearby hospital but succumbed to her injuries the following morning.

A similar incident occurred the same month in Benin City, Edo State. In this case, a fight broke out between a newly wedded couple, whose romance was supposed to still be sweet. But the man, Kelvir Izeke, is now behind bars for allegedly killing his pregnant wife, Success Izeke.

A viral video showed police officers and residents removing Success' lifeless body from their apartment. The video revealed the horrific extent of her injuries, with deep machete wounds visible on her head.

Also on January 14, 2025, Saheed Ganiyu, a 47-year-old vulcanizer, allegedly set his girlfriend, Esther ablaze in Abuja. Fortunately, Esther survived the horrific attack, but the physical and emotional scars will remain.

Twenty-four hours earlier, Nigerians woke up to yet another devastating news of a 24-year-old National Youth Service Corp member, Salome Adaidu, who was killed by her fiancé, Timileyin Ajayi, in Nasarawa State. In this case, her head was severed while the rest of her body was chopped in bits and bagged. During interrogation, the suspect accused the late Adaidu of being unfaithful.

Additionally, on Sunday morning of January 26, 2025, while other Christian faithful were preparing for their respective places of worship, a heated argument broke out between a couple – Mr Sunday and Mrs. Chinonso Echegi, in their apartment in Nsukka, Enugu State. In the process, Sunday allegedly chopped off his wife's left hand with a knife.

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Investigation shows that an average of eight cases of domestic violence happened between September and December 2024, in Nigeria. Statistics at our disposal revealed that nine cases of femicide were reported in September, with two incidents each, in Ogun and Kogi states and one each in Adamawa, Ondo, Edo, Delta and Anambra states.

Surprisingly, it was discovered during investigation that domestic violence between unmarried lovers has a higher ratio of 55.6%, when compared to those in marriage, with 33.3% reported cases of domestic violence.

Intimate partner violence affected women aged 25-38 and non-intimate partner violence and domestic violence affected women and girls aged 17-38.

The most heartbreaking reported case of femicide was that of Christana Idowu, a 21-year-old 300-level student of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB) who was allegedly killed by Ayomide Adeleye, a student at the Olabisi Onabanjo University, OOU, Ogun State. Another victim, Ogechukwu Okafor, was allegedly stabbed to death by her husband, Elijah Ibeabuchi, in Anambra State.

Among the non-intimate femicide incidents that occurred in the period under review was that of the murder of Damilola Olowoyo, a 19-year-old student of the Federal University of Lokoja, Kogi State, who was allegedly murdered by Jeremiah Samson who had earlier kidnapped her and collected a ransom of N400,000 from her parents.

In November and December, 14 cases of femicide were reported in Nigeria. Ten of these cases were reported in November and four in December 2024. A breakdown of the incidents revealed that Enugu state had the highest record with four cases, two cases were reported in Adamawa and Ogun states

respectively, while one case each was reported in Bayelsa, Cross River, Ebonyi, Jigawa, and Plateau states.

In one of the cases reported in December 2024, one Malami Gebawa from Durbawa village in Kware Local Government Area, Sokoto State, allegedly broke his wife's right leg and hand for attending a clinic without his permission.

Reactions

Suggesting ways to sensitize members of the public on the menace of domestic violence, Founder of Mirabel Center, Itoro Eze-Anaba, said there was need for every Nigerian to have knowledge on domestic violence and its consequences to the victim or survivor and the perpetrator.

She stated that the media also had a role to play in this regard. According to her: "the role of the media goes beyond reporting, to agenda setting and holding the government accountable. The church, the school, community associations, professional bodies, employers, and labour unions should all engage in sensitization to curb the menace of domestic violence".

While noting that the menace transcended beyond regions, she lamented that "cultural and societal norms prevent women from speaking out. Undue emphasis on marriage as being the symbol of success for women is a contributing factor. Where marriage is seen as an achievement, fear of being seen as a 'failure' also prevents women in abusive relationships from leaving those relationships.

In many instances, there is generational violence, as a child who sees his mother being abused by his father also goes on to abuse his wife, believing that violence is normal in relationships. Punishing abusers is a process that starts with reporting the incident to the police and ends with the sentencing of the perpetrator by the court based on available evidence beyond all reasonable doubt.

In this process, so many individuals and institutions are involved. It is important that all stakeholders in this process have the resources and the capacity to fulfill their responsibilities towards holding the perpetrator accountable and keeping the survivor safe. Where there is a gap or lack of capacity by any of the institutions involved, then it is difficult to 'punish the abusers', she said.

She therefore called for all hands to be on deck, "starting from the home, the community, law enforcement, judiciary, and other institutions working together to protect the survivor and hold the perpetrator accountable", Eze-Anaba stated.

Impact on children

Speaking on how domestic violence affects children who witness it, Nneka Okeleke, an educationist and child advocate, said, "every child deserves a peaceful and blissful environment, where love and unity dwell, but when it is vice versa, the child begins to see violence as the best way to resolve conflicts.

It becomes difficult for them to associate with other children peacefully. They see every opportunity to fight and be brutal, especially those whose parents go as far as indulging themselves in using weapons and tools against the other. I have seen cases like this. In fact, while such children are involved, their parent(s) fuel the chaos even more.

"Secondly, depression shapes their lives. Children who are raised in an abusive and traumatic environment might grow to become depressed, anxious, less expressive, and toxic individuals, and this can last for a longer time. Another predominant factor is that violence becomes a pattern in the lives of these children and might extend from one generation to the other except for the interference of God. There are cases when people mention that their fathers beat their mothers, and that makes them think that the only language that a woman understands is violence, especially the stubborn one and vice versa.

"The effects of domestic violence are incredibly deep and lasting. Addressing these issues requires the cooperation of both parents and teachers to show children that being involved is not the way forward. That is why parents should do better and ensure that their arguments or conflicts should be settled behind closed doors. Teachers should ensure that any child caught bullying another must be sanctioned and enlightened on the negative impact domestic violence has on a child and the society at large."

What the laws say

Speaking on the effectiveness of Nigeria's laws in protecting victims of domestic violence, a legal practitioner and dispute resolution lawyer, Timothy Olamide, defined domestic violence as behavior directed towards a family or household member that could cause a reasonable person to feel traumatized, frightened, intimidated, threatened, harassed, or assaulted.

Making reference to the constitution, Timothy noted that, "statutorily, section 18(g) of the Protection Against Domestic Violence Law of Lagos State, 2007, defines domestic violence to mean physical abuse, sexual abuse, and exploitation, including but not limited to rape, incest, and sexual assault; starvation; emotional, verbal, and psychological abuse; economic abuse and exploitation; denial of basic education; intimidation; harassment; stalking; hazardous attacks, including acid, both with offensive and poisonous substances; and damage to property, among others.

The above definition of domestic violence by the Protection Against Domestic Violence Law of Lagos State, 2007, means domestic violence is not limited to the cases cited. It means the definition accommodates other acts that the law did not contemplate at the time of its enactment by the government of Lagos State. Domestic violence is prevalent in Nigeria, hence the enactment of several

government or Lagos state. Domestic violence is prevalent in Nigeria, hence the enactment of severe laws both by the states and federal governments to curb the perpetration of the act of violence in the country.

“The laws not only frown upon the act of domestic violence but also provide for punishment at various degrees for those found guilty of perpetrating the act and provide compensation for the victims of domestic violence or their family members who are dependent on the victims where the victim dies in the course of domestic violence”.

Research according to him, showed that the lack of appropriate and satisfactory response from law enforcement officials was a huge gap in the fight against domestic and sexual violence, especially in Nigeria, as the majority of cases end up settled out of court.

According to him, “The law enforcement agencies often trivialize cases of domestic violence and give them little or no attention. This is because they seem to have more serious crimes to handle, than issues like domestic violence, which, in its true sense, is a serious crime, as sometimes the victim of domestic violence can die.”