

Human Rights and Gender Discrimination: Female Child and Violence

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Abstract- Violence has occupied a huge space in our society. It is an act that is not only creating social bias but also embarrassment, isolation, ostracism and even some times lead to death. Any act that is happening with purpose or without intention but is disturbing an individual negatively in an injurious or destructive way maybe supposed as violence. Violence may be social, political, religious or emotional depending on the condition of a neighboring society. Violence in any form is a misuse of human rights which limits or rejects an individual restricts to use his or her rights in the society. The basic rights are rights to live, speech or religion, freedom of thought, freedom of movement, choice, acceptance and safety. Inopportunately the girl-child has suffered most in our society, both within the family and the other social organizations that are destined to train, instruct and socialize her behavior. The girl-child in many countries has been sexually harassed, traded, deprived of education, disgraced, burdened and repressed. She has been exposed to many types of gender-based violence such as domestic violence, social violence, rape, forced for prostitution and forced for early marriage. These impose on the development, rights and physical security of the female gender particularly the girl child, with enormous and serious values. The objective of this paper is to see the level to which the girl-child has been exposed to violence, how she suffers and is still getting pains and tortures from one type of violence to the other. The paper determines that in spite of the violence prohibition Act of 2015 the girl-child is still very much exposed to violence and if certain actions against are not taken the girl-child will remain deprived of her own rights.

Index Terms- Violence, human Rights, verbal abuse, threats.

I. INTRODUCTION

Violence is a very difficult subject which takes frightening dimensions in different societies of the world. Violence can be physical, which can result in bodily harm, verbal exploitation, threats or deprivation. It can also present itself sexually or

socially, depending on the circumstances neighboring a particular society. The term 'violence' according to World Health Organization is 'the Intentional use physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which both consequences in or has a high probability of causing injury, death, mental destruction, mal-development or deprivation'. Violence against women is a worldwide alarm. Global violence has entirely distressed the girl child. Though Global legal mechanisms have been in place for years to safeguard the girl-child yet many cruel acts of violence and negligence has been detected around the whole world on regular basis. It is an act that roots pain, misery, loss of self-confidence, or even in some cases leads to death. It is also true that the issue of violence is not new in many countries. There are many who have cried out for Permanent solutions yet the issue is still prevalent among us .Violence in any form is a sign of an exploitation of human rights which limits or rejects an individual right to use his/her rights in society. Physical and mental violence against the girl –child happens both in community and domestically. Many of these violence are not stated for distress of embarrassment and/stigmatization.

II. VIOLENCE BASED ON GENDER

Violence based on gender is mainly violence committed against the female gender. Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men as described in to article 2 of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of violence against Women Gender-based. Violence is thus a term for any harm

committed against an individual's wish and it can be physical, sexual, mental, financial, or socio-economic. Violence is hence a means of control. Thus, any action committed in public or private created on gender which results in injury, suffering, disgrace or death is mentioned to as gender-based Violence. Unfortunately the girl-child is incapacitated to understand whom and how to choose for help. Many reports has shown that young females between the ages of 15 and 24 were the most likely to experience violence but the reality of the problem is that since most of these actions of violence are not reported there is no true data. From the newspaper reports of some of these events we know that the ages of some of these sufferers of acts of violence are at times unbelievable because some children have suffered sexual violence even in their relations.

III. THE GIRL-CHILD

It is significant to describe the girl-child for the purposes of this work. Female genders from birth through childhood to teenage years will be called the girl child as she has not became a woman. The girl child is thus defined as a female child in the mid of infancy and early adulthood. Throughout this age of growth the girl-child is supposed to be in the care and observation of parents, guardians and older siblings. She learns by observation and analyzing and thus attains adulthood –physically, mentally, and emotionally. It is also a age of Innocence, unawareness, exploration and of learning. At this age she is certainly subjective and beliefs people nearby. It is a serious age in her growth because she could effortlessly be abused and cheated. The girl-child is at all times in a greater risk than the male counterpart. She is trusted with observing after her younger siblings, does house hold tasks at a very affectionate age, assists as a servant to other families, hawks wares, serves as sales girl and when men engage in secret and demonic cults and need to make human sacrifices it still the female parts of a Bhuman being that their gods take. In fact the girl-child is a rare species.

IV. FORMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence in this excerpt refers to the different forms of violence the girl-child suffers.

Over the years not only in Nigeria but also in the world over, especially in Africa the female gender has been facing all forms of dehumanization, maltreatment, exploitation, oppression, humiliation, subjugation, negligence and even isolation. For the purposes of this paper, only three types of gender based violence will be discussed—viz Domestic Violence, Sexual Violence, Cultural Violence

V. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In the National Demographic and Health Survey (NPC) and ICF Macro 2009, Nigeria has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in Africa. Most often we read in newspapers of children that are brutally manhandled- Many of these children suffer in the hands of family members who have taken them up as maids or in the guise of trying to help them and especially children from poor families. At the slightest provocation such girl-child is traumatized, frustrated, bullied, etc denied certain rights—for example education, good nutrition, entertainment, clothing etc Many are punched, abused, spat at—yet they keep quiet. She may not be sent to school, and even if she does, she may not learn much because by the time she reaches school other children may have done one or two lessons.

Again, the weakness of the body may not help her to concentrate, being the only one that handles the household chores, the last to go to bed and the first to wake up. Domestic violence sometimes makes sure the child is punished beyond whatever crime she has committed. Imagine where a girl-child in primary six is given fifty strokes of the cane. A father used hot pressing iron to scald two of his children on their stomachs because their step-mother accused them of stealing fish from her stew pot. A woman used razor blade to put severe cuts on the body of her maid. Many of these maids have gone home with several indelible cuts/marks on their bodies. One poured acid on her maid. Some are dressed in rags or oversize clothes. Many go to bed on empty-stomachs, if they must eat, they have to pray that the bread would go stale or the soup sour. Shockingly, most of these girls and their families endure and sometimes die in silence believing that there is nowhere to get justice.

According to Animasun, Denrele Domestic Violence affects not just the victim but indirectly all those who witness the violence: children- family, relatives and

witnesses to the physical abuse and violence. It predisposes the children to trauma and other psychological problems throughout their lives and worryingly: they may learn to become future victims or abuses later on in life and hence the cycle continues-Page 16 Sunday Vanguard July 30, 2017

VI. SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Cases of sexual violence against the girl-child in Nigeria have alarmingly developed a regular feature in the dailies. We frequently are opposed to such strange stories such as this: Five students of Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo and Giwa Polytechnic, Owo rape a female student and recorded the criminal activity to blackmail victim into silence.(Vanguard Newspaper –July,23rd 2017) Again, the girl-child is at the center of this crime. Okoroafor, Cynthia quoting Jose Found age claims that six out of every Nigerian child under the age of 18 years experience one form of physical, emotional and sexual violence before the age of eighteen. Under sexual violence many are raped by the individuals that are thought to guide, teach, love, cherish and protect them. Such people are the only fathers of the sufferers, older relatives (blood brothers/ nephews/cousins) etc; teachers in the school, friends, neighbors and peer-groups and of course unknowns. It is a true that many a girl child is used to hawk wares—food items etc. to make ends meet and many in the proposal to support their families economically are trapped by people fantasizing or encouraging to purchase all they have to sell and so rape them, at construction sites, incomplete houses, or in the marketplaces even in stalls. Many maids are often raped by their bosses. Even in primary schools teachers rape their students.

VII. CULTURAL VIOLENCE

Unfortunately in the African culture the female gender is intended to be seen and not to be heard. She is exposed to all forms of embarrassment. In our society today still there are some food particularly meat which the female gender cannot eat. she must sit in a specific manner, dress in a specific manner and speak in a specific way. Achebe depicting our values in one of his novels: the protagonist-Okonkwo shouts on Ezimma “to sit like a woman.” Further than this, the female gender is not permitted

to receive possessions, if a man expires without a male child, all he labored for goes to his brother. In some communities the wife is deprived of all the man’s possessions. In some, places one of girls may be deprived of the chance of getting married. She stays in her father’s house to procreate so as to uphold the family lineage. Some girls , are deprived of education, just for being a girl and they are meant to be for a man’s kitchen, so there is no need of educating a girl. Early marriages are still in practice in many parts of the country, unfortunately these girls in their tender ages are married to old age peoples similar in age to their father or grand father. Some of the girls are married off against their desire. According to Uwais a gender activist ‘child marriage is the worst form of violence against the girl child. According to Obinna- “Between 120,000 and 150,000 Nigerian women and girls live with the despicable disease”(Sunday Vanguard, August, 20, 2017) Studies have also revealed that social principles of marriage and conception at a very early age, often before full genital development has been attained, is the most prevalent causative factor of this dreaded VVF. It is disheartening to note that most often these ladies become stigmatized and dehumanized. The condition affects their emotional and psychological well-being and most often the people that caused their woes chase them out of their homes, they end up becoming homeless, hopeless, dejected, rejected, dehumanized, traumatized and frustrated. In some societies the girl-child undergoes female genital mutilation rituals. Female Genital Mutilation is the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for non-medical reasons. This act has done terrible damage to girl’s organs as it causes severe pain and may result in prolonged bleeding, infection, infertility and even death. This is outright violation against the right of the girl child.

VIII. CONCLUSION

According to World Health Organization in “World Report on Violence and Health: Violence is one of the leading causes of death in all parts of the world “(Krug et al ed.(2002)Many are injured, dehumanized and so suffer from a range of physical, sexual, reproductive and mental health issues. The

activities of men and some women contribute to suppressing and violating the rights of the girl-child. The girl-child has been traded, bought, and sold across national borders as commodities to be put to use as prostitutes or slaves or merely sold to make profit.

Despite the worrisome situation of girl-child violence little or nothing is being done to arrest this ugly situation. All of us, especially the female gender should rise and take a stand against all types of violence and aggression against the girl-child. There should be planned public awareness in all the states of the federation which will be aimed at households, universities, communities, marketplaces, public and private offices. The girl-child should be encouraged to speak out against any act of violence whether at home, in the school or even in the church. Organizations such as FIDA, UNICEF,WHO, THE National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic In Persons(NAPTIP) should all work towards protecting the girl-child. The Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act,2015 which was signed into law on the 25th of May 2015 must be made to work. Perpetrators should be brought to book and be made to pay heavy financially compensations for harm done or even be imprisoned.

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