Mitigating Gender-Based Violence Through the Use of Ubuntu-Like Leadership in Nigeria Secondary School

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Abstract

In many African countries, the secondary school system has been marred by a wave of gender-based violence. Gender-based violence is a stumbling block to national growth and secondary school performance in countries all over the world, according to observations, studies, and literature. The purpose of this study is to determine the necessity for reducing gender-based violence in Nigerian classrooms and to propose possible remedies to the consequences of gender-based violence in schools. We used Ubuntu as a theoretical framework for the paper. Data was gathered through focus group interviews. A convenient sampling strategy was used to choose five teachers and five students from one of the selected secondary schools in Nigeria. The data collected was analysed using thematic analysis (TA), and the findings reveal a lack of gender-based violence sensitization in schools, a lack of a good community-based reporting mechanism, and a lack of counselling and support in schools. However, effective reporting mechanisms for students, proper counselling and Psycho-social care for victims, and proper and adequate sensitization for both learners and school officials were also suggested in Nigeria secondary schools.

Key words: Gender-based violence, Ubuntu, teachers, learners, secondary school, leadership

Introduction

The school is a microcosm of society. In Nigeria, secondary school is a post-primary basic education that prepares persons for self-sufficiency in the future. Gender-based violence has long been a problem in schools around the world, and in Nigeria, it has been a component in the development of secondary education. Gender-based violence is a global issue that requires immediate attention, as evidenced by policies enacted by international organizations such as the 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination Against Women, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 2006 World Report on Violence Against Children, and the Sustainable Development Goals. Policies passed in good faith and with good intentions, however, have not been implemented as planned by developing countries around the world, including Nigeria. Gender-based violence is an issue in affluent countries such as the United States,

England, and Sweden, as well as African countries such as South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, and Lesotho. In Nigeria, the national educational goal states that every child has an equal right to education, including the right to free primary and secondary education (National Policy of Education, 2014).

Section 14 of the Nigerian Constitution of 1999 forbids discrimination based on gender and states that both men and women must have equal access to essential services and legal proceedings (Nigeria Constitution, 1999). The 2007 National Policy Framework also advocates for a violence-free basic education, which includes teacher and learner sensitization, school manager training, the establishment of counselling units in schools, and monitoring and assessment (National Policy Framework, 2007). Despite these laws based on national and international legislation, gender-based violence continues to be a concern in Nigerian secondary schools (Garner, 2014; Lunneblad, Johansson & Odenbring, 2017; Afolabi, 2019; Olofinbiyi, 2021). According to the World Bank's 2018 report on violence against women and girls, at least one in three girls will encounter gender-based violence in their lifetime, which is a violation of the girl-child's right. According to UNESCO (2016), 246 million children worldwide are subjected to gender-based violence in schools. Gender-based violence is not just a problem for girls; boys are also victims of this threat.

Gender-based violence has long been an issue in Nigeria, according to reports from the Nigerian government and state governments (Uniga and Fwa, 2021). Bullying, indiscriminate touching of students, corporal punishment, and sexual abuse are examples of school gender-based violence that might occur in the restrooms, lobbies during break-time or after school hours (Lekalakala, 2019; Vanner, Holloway and Almanssori, 2022). Gender-based violence in the classroom occurs between learners, between teachers and learners, and between students and other school workers (Fawole, Balogun, & Olaleye, 2018). Nigeria is almost against the 1979 Conference on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and children in schools are subjected to different forms of violence, including rape, forced marriage, and child adoption by Boko-Haram terrorists (Bartlett, 2018). The problem persists, and the national dailies barely go a day without reporting on a new case of gender-based attack in Nigeria (Eteng and Eyisi, 2022). Also, Reid *et al.*, 2013; Palermo, Bleck, and Petermann, 2013; Ugowe, 2022 argued that some boy/girl-children do not heal from rape abuse, some students take their lives prematurely, teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted disease, some boy/girl-children lose their self-esteem, and there will be a need for several interventions for them to heal, battery paralysis, fear, depression, and other psychological triggers. Gender-based violence had a significant detrimental impact on learners' educational outcomes, mental health, physical health, and violence consequences in society at large in some circumstances (Akpan, 2009; Ifegbesan, 2010; Andere, 2018; Baldwin-White, Daigle, and Teasdale, 2022).

Consequently, Ajayi (2017) reported that gender-based violence is an issue in Nigerian educational settings, which supports our views. Violence against women and girls According to (Ekine, Odufunwa, & Adebayo 2020; Ishaq & Bakwai 2016), is on the rise, with rape abuse and violence in schools. Most victims of gender-based violence come from dysfunctional homes, with some students being abused at home by either parents, neighbours, or uncles and aunties who are supposed to be role models for the young ones (Khan, and Deb, 2021). Gender-based violence is a new terrain in Nigeria, according to Obiagu, (2021), because there is no gender-based pedagogy in Nigerian schools. In Nigerian classrooms, learners require sensitization through curriculum-based pedagogy, teachers abuse students through indiscriminate touching, and school authorities sweep such incidents under the carpet (Ngidi & Moletsane, 2015). However, the government has failed to address the issue of gender-based abuse imbalances in homes in the past, resulting in secondary schools' incapacity to meet their objectives and goals.

In response to gender-based violence in Nigerian secondary schools, which has harmed the effectiveness and output of learners. The Nigerian government passed the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Acts of 2015 in 2015, which forbids gender-based violence against people of any gender. According to Williams and Nyong (2020), this method presented a policy alternative that increased productivity in Nigerian secondary schools. Jenyo (2021) claimed that the policy solution to gender-based violence did not result in the reduction of gender-based violence in Nigerian families. Existing research, on the other hand, has not offered a solution to the gender-based difficulties in Nigerian secondary schools with strained relationships between instructors and learners. In addition to the government's policy response, existing literature shows that more counselling units in schools, as well

as suitable sensitizations on gender-based violence in schools, are insufficient (Nduka-Ozo, 2017; Afolabi 2019). These, in our opinion, are insufficient because there is leadership that does not comprehend the situation, leadership that brushes the problem under the rug when it occurs, and leadership that has strained relationships with teachers and students. This is supported by (Omodan and Tsotetsi, 2019) that implementing good leadership makes it easier to manage stakeholders and build trust in educational settings. According to the data, the problem of gender-based violence in Nigeria's secondary education system could be linked to stretched leadership among education stakeholders. However, the goal of this research is to find a means to eliminate gender-based violence in Nigerian secondary schools by using effective leadership strategies. By doing so, we will investigate the nature of gender-based violence in Nigerian secondary schools, as well as the challenges it poses to secondary school effectiveness and potential remedies.

Theoretical Framework

The theory is based on the philosophy of Ubuntu. This was selected because it highlights individual interdependence, personhood, love, respect, and commitment (Tsotetsi and Omodan, 2020). It establishes appropriate guidelines for how people in the community and at work, particularly in educational institutions, should behave. The word "simunye," which means "we are one" in the spirit of togetherness, was used to express the history of ubuntu in the 18th century (Bangura, 2017: 95; Marunda, 2015: 10; Mpofu, 2002: 32, Variri & Variri 2019: 113). Humanity, personhood, and people respecting each other with fairness, dignity, and justice, according to Tutu in 2004. That is, people's survival is contingent on their interactions with others. Ubuntu is an African philosophy that focuses on the interconnectedness that exists in human interactions, as well as collaboration and commitment to the community's goals. Ubuntu is a philosophy that establishes moral guidelines for people's behaviour, ethics, acts, and accomplishments. It opposes selfishness and repressive behaviour, yet it upholds and fosters oneness. Humanity, solidarity, freedom, strength, resilience, compassion, empathy, oneness, and unity are all inscribed in a single universe of purpose (Brubaker, 2013: 123; Muzividziwa & Muzividziwa, 2012: 30).

In light of the foregoing, ubuntu is a multicultural belief system that encourages individuals to form good connections. When change is on the horizon, the Ubuntu philosophy is an agent of change. If this could be accomplished in society, society's citizens could then advocate it in the educational system. Because education stakeholders (Learners, instructors, school governing bodies, and school management teams) may recognise themselves in their peers, they will not attack one another under the cover of gender-based violence. If the school is to follow the laws and regulations, the school stakeholders must regard themselves as partners in progress, working together to attain the school's overall goals.

When the spirit of ubuntu is well utilised in Nigeria secondary schools, it makes learners see themselves as one, and achieves better results to reduce the effect of gender-based violence. When the spirit of ubuntu is well utilised in Nigeria secondary schools, it makes learners see themselves as one, and achieves better results to reduce the effect of gender-based violence. There should be a community-based reporting process where school governing boards and parent teacher associations meet to rectify or avoid such problems as they arise (Chilwalo, 2020). Wherever gender-based violence occurs, students and instructors will always support the victims.

Research Questions and Objectives

Based on the above examined problems of gender-based violence in Nigeria secondary schools, the following question was formulated to guide the study.

- How can gender based violence be addressed using ubuntu philosophy in Nigeria secondary schools.?

To answer the research questions, the following objectives were raised to further guide the study

- To examine the gender-based challenges in Nigeria secondary schools,
- To explore possible solutions to the challenges of gender-based violence in Nigeria secondary schools.

Methods

A qualitative technique was used to address the research questions and objectives in order to identify answers to the problems of gender-based violence in Nigerian secondary schools. This aids our comprehension of people and their social-cultural contexts in the community (Mohajan, 2018; Billups 2021). This approach is appropriate as it provides data for research questions of how and inquiry into why (Basias and Pollalis, 2018). To implement this, a case study appraoch was used in order to get an in-depth enquiry into an existing phenomenon. Case study according to Yin, (2014); Darlene F. et al. (2020), is suitable to describe trajectories in the implementation of a policy or a programme. As a result, the study should be based on a case study approach because the goal is to rationalise the gender-based issue in order to propose feasible answers in the implementation of gender-based school policies. The information from the selected individuals was gathered through focus group talks. It was chosen as a tool because it allows the interviewer to obtain a comprehensive look into the phenomenon. It also allows participants to have a say in the research process, and it allows the researcher to see the problem from the perspective of the participants (Sim and Waterfield, 2019).

Five teachers with five years of experience and five learners over the age of 18 were included in this study. They were divided into groups to avoid power struggles and to allow the students to address difficulties without fear of being judged. The participants were chosen utilising a convenient selection approach, which allows the researchers to interact with teachers and students at their convenience. It is also unique in that the group is homogeneous (Sharma, 2019).

Teachers and learners in Nigerian secondary schools were interviewed for this study. Teachers and students were contacted at various points during break time to avoid disturbing teaching and learning. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data obtained because it is appropriate since it responds to the study's objectives, which were divided into two categories: "problem" and "solutions" to gender-based problems. The three processes of coding proposed by Thomas and Hardy were used: coding, categorisation, and thematization. It was acceptable since it allowed researchers to code and categorise the data into themes for more uniform content (Thomas & Harden, 2008). The ministry of education had to approve the study before it could be carried out. Before the proper inquiry could begin, participants' consent was obtained. The researchers ensured that participants' rights were protected during the study process, and those who felt they wanted to withdraw during the research method were provided freedom.

Results

The findings of this study were organised into meaningful themes and discussed below. The three steps of thematic analysis proposed by Thomas and Hardy were used to identify these themes. Three themes were discovered and explored below: lack of sensitization on gender-based violence in schools, absence of a competent community-based reporting mechanism, and lack of counselling and psycho-social support in schools.

Lack of Adequate Sensitisations
The findings revealed that there is a lack of awareness of the issues of gender-based violence in schools, which is to blame for the school's shortcomings. This is widely viewed as a huge setback for educational systems in countries where secondary education and teaching and learning could have made a significant contribution (Rivera, 2020). (Perrin, N., Marsh, M., Clough, A., et al. 2019) also suggested that gender-based violence is a little-discussed topic in schools; this is the goal of this study, as stated in the following exchange:

"As a teacher there was one time some non-governmental organisations came to our school, gave us some leaflets about female genital mutilations of girl-child, is that gender-based violence?".

"As a learner I heard on radio about gender-based violence but it was based on family and community rape victims, don't really know about school related gender-based violence".

"Teachers sensitisation is a problem, as some schools don't even know about the issue"

"As a teacher and as a mother, I feel there is state policies on gender-based violence, but sentisation is a problem".

"As a learner we have various clubs about HIV/AIDS but I have not heard that much about school related clubs on gender-based" .

"As workload of teachers increased with teaching and learning and extra curricullum activities, I don't think I can have time for any sensitizations about gender-based violence".

"Black teachers especially in Nigeria are not informed about learners' sexuality".

The researchers extrapolated from the foregoing claims that there is a shortage of information on the subject issue, particularly in Nigerian rural schools. The statements confirmed that there are either little or no sensitisations at all. Sensitization of gender-based violence is a concern, according to (Ishaq & Bakwai, 2016; Kennedy, 2021), as schools lack the information to realise that such issues are a problem for school effectiveness in Nigeria. This is consistent with (Aitkin and Longford, 1986) findings that secondary school effectiveness is influenced by some limiting factors. Teachers and students require sensitization in order to avoid issues of gender-based violence, which has an impact on the achievement of school goals and objectives as well as society at large.

Lack of proper Counselling and Psycho-Social Support for Learners

In recent years, the government has refused to recruit counsellors and post them to rural areas, causing the counselling department in Nigerian schools to steadily fail. In order to provide Psycho-social support in schools, there should be a strong contact between students and the counselling department. (Ndlovu, 2019) claimed that psycho-educational support for students helps them concentrate better in order to achieve academic brilliance. Gender-based violence is a problem that requires Psycho-social support for victims. According to the following participants' statements, there is a stated lack of counselling and Psycho-social support for learners.

"As a learner, we had our counsellor trasffered but was not replaced since last session"

"learners drop-out of schools, when they get raped and pregnant to avoid been shamed"

"A learner touch me at a time in school and I told my english male teacher but laughed it off, if we had cousellor in our school, I would have visited the units".

"As a teacher, I think that there is no fairness, dignity, and respect between the learners"

"Lack of proper counselling unit and Psycho-social support for gender-based victims in schools".

"I know one of my friend that do drop-out because she was pregnant for one of the boys in the school, the boy continued but the girl dropped out".

"There is no or little support from the government for recruiting counsellors in rural schools".

According to the foregoing comments, there is little or no psycho-educational support for students in schools. To ensure school effectiveness in Nigerian secondary schools, learners should get psycho-support in all aspects of school life, including gender-based indices (Ezegwu *et al.*, 2021). However, the situation in rural schools is worrisome, as there is little support for proper counselling support in schools. Above all, the government and department of education have failed to provide support in the form of counsellors recruitment, which has contributed to the poor and ineffective implementation of school-related gender-based violence policies in schools. From Ubuntu perspectives, such programmes need collaborative efforts of stakeholders from recruitments, to counsellors and learners must work hand-in-hand to achieve academic excellence and effectiveness in Nigeria secondary schools (Masondo, 2017; Moyo, 2019).

Lack of Community-based report Mechanism

The findings revealed that there is no reporting mechanism in place in schools, which has an impact on secondary school effectiveness and overall school goals and objectives. There is no adequate reporting process for victims of gender-based violence in Nigerian secondary schools, which is a big setback (Olofinbiyi, 2021). In the same vein, Sibisi, 2021, suggested that through Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), School Management Teams (SMTs), and School Management Boards, community-based report mechanisms can be formed as it will help resolve any school-related gender-based violence. This is obvious in the statements made by the following participants.

"As a teacher, there was one time that the principal beg one of the victims with the parents to let go of a gender-based case in the school, to avoid body-shaming the teacher and the learner involved in the situation".

"As a learner, there is no gender-based violence report mechanism in my school".

"As a teacher, some parents don't spread the issue to avoid been shamed in the community, where they are respected citizens".

"As a learner, I once told my mummy that my male teacher touched my breast, but my mum said shut up".

According to the aforementioned comments, Nigerian secondary schools lack a community-based reporting mechanism. When any issue develops in schools, parents, school administrators, government, learners, instructors, and the community must communicate interactively, particularly when it comes to gender-based issues. Rural schools, on the other hand, are the most affected by gender-based violence. The community in Nigerian secondary school locations needs to establish a reporting mechanism to schools where students can go to report wrongdoings by either learners or teachers (Smiley, Moussa, Ndamobissi and Menkiti, 2021). According to Ubuntu, teachers, students, and the community should collaborate by emphasising personhood, humanitarian behaviour, and healthy communicative interactions. You treat others properly and respect their thoughts and perspectives when you see yourself through their eyes. It will checkmate the learners and administrators with compassion and concern wherever this occurs. Consequently, Setlhodi, 2019 aver that ubuntu allows questioning stakeholders when necessary in order to understand how to work together to attain the school's overall aims and goals.

Discussion

According to the findings, there is a dearth of sensitization on the topic of gender-based violence in rural schools. This is the first step in implementing gender-based policies in secondary schools in Nigeria. The lack of awareness about the issue in schools has caused more harm than good in terms of resolving the problem posed to school effectiveness and learner quality output. As a result, a lack of proper awareness of the issues has a negative influence on resolving gender-based violence in Nigerian secondary schools. This supports (Afolabi, 2019; Kennedy, 2021) findings that a lack of proper problem sensitization has a major detrimental influence on school performance. The findings of (Mwasya, 2015; Adejumo, O. A et al. 2021) substantiate the conclusions that insufficient sensitisation on a phenomenon is accountable for learners' negative perceptions of the topic. According to the findings, there is a shortage of effective counselling and psycho-social assistance for learners and teachers in Nigerian rural schools. In Nigerian secondary schools, the implementation of counselling units and Psycho-social support will boost student production and school effectiveness. In tackling the issue of gender-based violence in schools, the absence of psycho-social support for students has caused more harm than benefit. As a result, in Nigerian secondary schools, a lack of psycho-social assistance for students has a negative impact on learners' academic achievement. This is in line with the findings of (Kaufman, M.R. et al. 2019; Omodan, 2020), who stated that learners lack social support when they report cases of gender-based violence affect general effectiveness of the school and in-turn improves academic performance of learners.

The study also found that in Nigeria secondary schools, there is a lack of community-support reporting mechanisms for victims of gender-based violence in rural settings. The lack of a community-support system has done more harm than good to the efficacy of schools and the outcomes of learners.

Therefore, community-based report mechanism remained the best strategy as learners and parents has where they can walk in and report gender-based abuse. This findings is in consonance with the findings of (Gurman,T. A., *et al.,* 2014; Andere, 2018; Wight, D. et al., 2022) that community-based report mechanism helps in the reduction of gender-based violence in schools.

Conclusion

The limitations of implementing gender-based policies in Nigeria secondary schools are revealed via an empirical examination into gender-based abuse trajectories. The absence of sensitizations on the topic of gender-based violence to increase the actualization of school aims and goals is one of these challenges, which has been recognised as being prevalent in the rural context of Nigerian schools. Second, there is a shortage of counselling and Psycho-social support for gender-based violence victims in schools. Finally, the lack of community-based reporting procedures for victims of gender-based violence makes it difficult for Nigerian schools to implement school effectiveness. This is to conclude that a lack of sensitization for learners and teachers, a lack of counselling and Psycho-social support for students, and a lack of community-based reporting mechanisms for victims are all dimensions of the problems of school-related gender-based violence in rural Nigeria secondary schools. In our opinion, these reasons have rendered GBV policy implementation in Nigeria secondary schools ineffective and ineffective in supporting victims of gender-based violence. As a result of the foregoing facts, it is suggested that:

1. The government should develop gender-based violence prevention policies in schools through the ministry of education. There have been policies in community management of gender-based violence, but when the government recognises that the school is a microcosm of society, it will be expedient to make gender-based violence prevention policies for both primary and secondary schools, with ubuntu and personhood characteristics if implemented in schools, there will be love, care, and respect among students.

2. The government, through the ministry of education, should incorporate gender-based violence prevention strategies into school curricula. When sexuality is taught as a subject in schools, it improves the curriculum's instructions and raises awareness regarding gender-based violence prevention.

The government should establish a gender-based community-based report mechanism in schools, where students can come in and report without fear or favour, and where parents can come in with their children to report any wrongdoing by teachers or students. The community-based report mechanism will include parents, school management teams, police, and the school governing board. It is necessary to maintain open lines of communication between the community and the area where the school is located in order to protect the heritage which ubuntu espoused.

Implications For Education Managers And Policy Makers

School management teams, policymakers, and school owners can use the findings to improve the quality of curricular instructions and sensitise learners about gender-based violence knowledge constructions. The findings of this study can be used by the Ministry of Education and secondary schools to develop professional development programmes for pre-service and in-service teachers, conference papers for principals, and clubs for learners to become more aware of gender-based natures, prevention, and control. It is critical to include parents in the policy-making process since their decisions will have an impact on the learners' choices.

Acknowledgement

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