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The Role of Women Librarian in Eradicating Gender Based Violence in Rivers State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

The study examined the roles of women librarians in eradicating gender based violence in Rivers State, Nigeria. Four (4) objectives were formulated to guide this study. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the research. The population for the study comprised 70 women Librarians in Rivers State. Census sampling was adopted. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire. Mean and percentage were used for analyzing the elicited responses. Based on the findings, the various forms of gender based violence are; emotional violence, sexual violence, physical violence, socio-economic violence, amongst others. The study also identified the roles of women librarians in eradicating GBV to include; sensitization and awareness programme on the dangers of GBV and enlightenment on organizations and NGOs to contact when violated. Based on the findings the following recommendations were made: women librarians should sensitize the public through talk shows, workshops, seminars etc. on the dangers and aftermath of gender based violence. This would go a long way in curbing the menace of GBV, women librarians should partner with Organizations.

Keywords: Gender based-violence, Women librarians, Rivers State, Nigeria

Introduction

Gender based violence (GBV) has become a global issue. Victims of GBV suffer both physical and emotional damage. Research has proven that GBV victims are mostly women and girls. GBV affects the physical and emotional health of women and can potentially destroy communities and societies. It is a systemic issue that permeates and affects diverse sectors of any society with implications for growth and development and so cannot be ignored (Williams and Nyong, 2019). The effect of GBV not only affects the victims but the society as well.

Gender based violence according United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), (2019), refers to harmful acts directed to an individual based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms. GBV is an inhumane and wicked act that violates the principle of human life. GBV is life threatening, with serious health, mental and emotional consequences. According to UNHCR reports one in three women will experience sexual or physical violence in their lifetime.

Gender based violence can take various forms which include but not limited to the following listed below; Emotional Violence, physical violence and sexual violence. Emotional violence is a nonphysical behavior aimed at belittling victims, this can include insults, verbal threats or other tactics that make victims feel threatened, inferior, ashamed or degraded. Its perpetrators talk down on victims and often times use what they know or victims' inadequacies to down play their persona. The psychological effects of this violence on victims cannot be overlooked.

Physical Violence includes all forms of physical assault on a person, it can include kicking, hitting, burning etc. Victims of physical violence suffer risk of physical injury and in most cases death. Also, sexual Violence is an all-encompassing phenomena that is used to refer to various forms of illicit sexual activities against victims such as rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, sexual harassment etc. UN Women report of 2021 indicates that a total of 11,200 including women and children were raped to death were reported in Nigeria in 2020. This report shows the high rate of sexual violence in Nigeria.

UNHCR identified other forms of sexual violence to include, child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). A UN report of 2021 indicates that about 43.5 percent of female children were given out in early marriages, 18.4 percent suffered from FGM, 17.4 percent suffered from

lifetime physical or secular intimate partner. Other forms of GBV may include but not limited to financial violence, psychological violence etc.

The fight against GBV should not just be left in the hands of the government and security agents, it is collective efforts. The National Library Association (NLA), a recognized professional body of librarians working in Nigeria have important roles to play in eradicating this menace. It is on this back ground that the study sought to investigate the roles of the women librarians in eradicating gender based violence in Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

Women Librarians in Nigeria, over the years have contributed immensely to the nation's building through meeting the information needs of the society including women and girls. They also help to address issues affecting the society including gender based violence. Observation has shown that women and girls always fall victim of gender based violence and this has caused more havoc than good in the society. If not dealt with the society will be greatly affected. It is on this premise that the study sought to investigate the roles of women librarians in eradicating gender based violence in Rivers State.

Objectives of the study

The objective of the study is to examine the role of women librarian in eradicating gender based violence in Rivers state. Specifically, the study tends to;

1. To identify the forms of Gender based violence in Rivers State.
2. To identify the roles of women librarians in in eradicating gender based violence in Rivers State.
3. To identify the challenges in eradicating Gender based violence by women librarians in Rivers State.
4. To identify strategies that enhance the eradication of Gender based violence by women librarians in Rivers State.

Research Questions

1. What are the various forms of gender based violence in Rivers State?

2. What are the roles of women librarians in eradicating gender based violence in Rivers State?
3. What are the challenges in eradicating Gender based violence by women librarians in Rivers State?
4. What are the strategies that enhance the eradicate Gender based violence by women librarians in Rivers State?

Literature Review

The issue of gender based violence (GBV) cuts across women of various socio-economic and educational backgrounds. GBV is a menace that has attracted attention from government and non-governmental associations across nations. A study by Djamba and Kimuna (2015) on gender-based violence: perspectives from Africa, the Middle East and India revealed that the issue of GBV in the regions understudied has been a taboo in everyday discourse. This they attributed to the patriarchal cultural norms that puts a limit to women's freedom. They regarded GBV as the most pervasive yet least recognized human rights violation of our time.

In a study by Russo and Pirlott (2006), GBV was clearly defined by the United Nations during the 1995 UN conference on women in Beijing as any act that happens in private or public that may lead to physical, sexual or psychological harm to women, including threat to such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty. It was further revealed that women and girls all over the world fall victims of GBV in various places such as the home, school, church, workplace, street and even in therapeutic settings.

At the workplace, Ajayi (n.d) noted some acts of GBV such as sexual favours, inappropriate jokes, insinuations, comments and unwanted physical contact that can amount to assault. It is appalling to note however that the perpetrators of this act in the workplace go scot free because their victims entertain fear of disbelief from third party, blame or social/professional retaliation.

Emmanuel and Lulu-Pokubo (2021) in their study on Gender Based violence and Covid-19 revealed that GBV is predominantly on the increase during cases of emergency, be it economic crisis, conflict or disease. This is because in crisis, women are forced to stay at home with their perpetrators and are cut off from support services. According to the authors this violence can result in injuries and serious physical, mental sexual and reproductive health problems including sexually transmitted infections, HIV, and unplanned pregnancies.

According to Isma'il (2021) GBV originated from perceived inequality between men and women in the family and the society at large. The study identified various forms of GBV such as beating, rape, humiliation, verbal abuse, widowhood practices, early marriage, female genital mutilation, amongst others. The author further stated some of the causes of GBV in Nigeria as cultural values and religious practices. For instance, many parents subject their girl child to early

marriage and female genital mutilation because it is believed that these practices help to preserve the virginity of the girl for their future husband. Another popular belief that the man is bread winner of the home, therefore the woman's role is limited to home making which in turn makes her to be financially dependent on the husband even for the least of her needs. The researcher further recommended that curbing the menace of GBV involves a collective effort of government, individuals, civil society and non-governmental organizations.

Williams and Nyong (n.d) stated that 25% of women aged 25-49 have been involved in one form of violence or the other since the age of 15. Their study further revealed that tradition, culture, socio-economic conditions, lack of adequate state intervention, posturing of religious institutions and fear of stigmatization as some of the factors that are responsible for the prevalence of GBV.

On the way forward, Fabunmi and Adepoju (2020) asserted that gender equality can only be achieved by getting rid of harmful practices against women and girls including sex trafficking, femicide, wartime sexual violence and oppression tactics. Citing the UN SDG's on goal 5, it was clearly stated that one major way of curbing the menace of GBV that is eating deep into many nations of the world is to provide equal access to education, health care, decent work and representation in political and economic decision making processes.

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) in their article titled libraries and cultural rights of women (2017), disclosed an interesting and captivating fact that women are central to the well-being of the society. Therefore any form of violence against a woman has a generational effect that lives beyond her and inevitably has a negative impact on the community, society and nation at large.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population for the study comprised of 70 women Librarians in the AWLIN Rivers State. Census sampling was used to sample the entire population since it is small and manageable. The instrument for data collection was a structured online questionnaire which was a 4 point likert scale ranging from 4-1. A total number of 36 properly filled questionnaires was used for analysis. Mean and percentage were used for analyzing the elicited responses. A mean of 2.50 was used as the decision rule. Mean above 2.50 was accepted while any item with a mean below 2.50 was not accepted.

Results

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

The respondents consist of 36 women librarians from the three public universities in Rivers State. The result of their years of experience as librarians were 14 (38.9%) for 1-5 years, 2(5.6%) for 5-10 years, 10(27.8%) for 10-15 years and 10(27.8%) for 15 years and above. The result of

the respondent qualification were; 14(38.8%) Doctorate degree, 12(33.3%) Master's degree, 8(22.2%) Bachelor's degree and HND 2(5.6%).

Research question 1: what are the various forms of gender based violence in Rivers State?

Table 1: The various forms of gender based violence in Rivers State.

s/no	Item statement	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	T	X	Decision
1.	Psychological violence	20	12	4	0	36	3.44	A
2.	Sexual violence	24	8	4	0	36	3.56	A
3.	Stalking	18	10	2	6	36	3.11	A
4.	Physical violence	28	6	2	0	36	3.72	A
5.	Forced marriages	20	14	2	0	36	3.50	A
6.	Rape	34	0	2	0	36	3.89	A
7.	Female genital mutilation	22	12	0	2	36	3.50	A
8.	Sexual harassment	26	8	2	0	36	3.67	A
9.	Early marriage	14	22	0	0	36	3.39	A
10.	Forced abortion	18	12	2	4	36	3.22	A
11.	Trafficking in persons	22	14	0	0	36	3.61	A

(Keys: SA: Strongly Agreed, A:Agreed, D:Disagree, SD: Strongly Disagree, T: Total, X: mean A: Accepted)

Table 1 shows the various forms of gender based violence in Rivers State. From the table, Rape (3.89), physical violence(3.72) and sexual harassment(3.67) are the major forms of gender based violence in Rivers State.

Research question 2: what are the roles of Women Librarians in eradicating gender based violence in Rivers State?

Table 2: roles of Women Librarians in eradicating gender based violence in Rivers State.

s/no	Item statement	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	T	X	Decision
1.	Educating women on the causes of violence through sensitization programs.	32	4	0	0	36	3.89	A
2.	Creating awareness on the need for gender equality	30	4	0	2	36	3.72	A
3.	Partnering with organizations both local and international to ensure that victims of GBV are protected	32	4	0	0	36	3.89	A
4.	Partnering with local and international organizations to empower victims of GBV.	32	4	0	0	36	3.89	A
5.	Partnering with security agencies and organizations to ensure that perpetrators of GBV are brought to book.	26	10	0	0	36	3.72	A
6.	Organizing programs and activities where women can talk about issues they are facing.	28	6	2	0	36	3.72	A

(Keys: SA: Strongly Agreed, A:Agreed, D:Disagree, SD: Strongly Disagree, T: Total, X: mean A: Accepted)

Table 2 shows the roles of women librarians in eradicating gender based violence in Rivers State. The results reveals that all items on the table were accepted, as they scored above the expected mean criterion of 2.50.

Research question 3: What are the challenges encountered by women librarians in eradicating gender based violence in Rivers State?

Table 3: The challenges encountered by Women Librarians in eradicating gender based violence in Rivers State.

s/no	Item statement	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	T	X	Decision
1.	Fear on the path of GBV victims to open up	28	8	0	0	36	3.78	A
2.	Lack of funds to carry out sensitization programmes and activities	24	12	0	0	36	3.67	A
3.	Lack of awareness on the path of some women librarians on their roles in eradicating GBV	20	12	4	0	36	3.44	A
4.	Lack of trust in the judiciary system to bring perpetrators of GBV to book.	28	8	0	0	36	3.78	A

(Keys: SA: Strongly Agreed, A: Agreed, D:Disagree, SD: Strongly Disagree, T: Total, X: mean A: Accepted)

Table 3 shows the challenges encountered by women librarians in eradicating gender based violence in Rivers State based. From the table it shows that Fear on the path of GBV victims to open up and Lack of trust in the judiciary system to bring perpetrators of GBV to book with the mean score of 3.78 each are the major challenges encountered by women librarians in eradicating gender based violence in Rivers State.

Research question 4: What are the strategies to eradicate gender based violence in Rivers State?

Table 4: The strategies to eradicate gender based violence in Rivers State.

s/no	Item statement	VA 4	A 3	LA 2	NA 1	T	X	Decision
1.	Women Librarians should encourage GBV victims to speak up and report to the appropriate institutions when victimized.	32	4	0	0	36	3.89	A
2.	Women Librarians should solicit for funds from the government and other non-governmental organizations to carry out sensitization programmes.	24	12	0	0	36	3.67	A
3.	Women Librarians should attend workshops and conferences to awaken them on their roles in eradicating GBV.	28	8	0	0	36	3.78	A
4.	Proper follow up by women librarians to ensure justice is meted on GBV perpetrators.	34	2	0	0	36	3.94	A

(Keys: VA: Very Appropriate, A:Appropriate, LA: Less Appropriate, NA: Not Appropriate, T: Total, X: mean A: Accepted)

Table 4 shows the strategies to eradicate gender based violence in Rivers State. The table shows Proper follow up by women librarians to ensure justice is meted on GBV perpetrators (3.94) and Women Librarians should encourage GBV victims to speak up and report to the appropriate institutions when victimized (3.89) as the major strategies to eradicate gender based violence in Rivers state.

Discussion of findings

The various forms of gender based violence

The finding of this study shows that rape, physical violence and sexual harassment are highest form of gender based violence in Rivers State. This is in line with the study of Isma'il (2021) who also identified rape as one of the forms of gender based violence. However, there are other forms of gender based violence identified in this study, such as forced marriages, beating, Psychological violence, Sexual violence, Stalking and physical violence. Although they might look minor based on the study, however it is important to be aware of them as other forms of gender based violence that exist.

The roles of Women Librarians in eradicating gender based violence in Rivers State.

The study shows that educating women on the causes of violence through sensitization programs, Partnering with organizations both local and international to ensure that victims of GBV are protected and Partnering with local and international organizations to empower victims of GBV are roles of women librarians in eradicating gender based violence in Rivers State. This is Similar to Emmanuel and Lulu-Pokubo (2021) which states that Librarians can partner with other firms and organization to empower victims by providing funds, materials and information services that will benefit GBV victims. Hence women librarians in Rivers state need to wake up to these roles so as to eradicate gender based violence in Rivers State.

The challenges encountered by Women Librarians in eradicating gender based violence in Rivers State.

The study shows that fear on the path of GBV victims to open up and Lack of trust in the judiciary system to bring perpetrators of GBV to book are the major challenges encountered by women librarians in eradicating gender based violence in Rivers State. This confirms the study of Izzi and Umunna (2020) which state that despite the laws on gender based violence, there

appears to be a gap between law and practice. Women and girls still suffer unthinkable forms of abuse in Nigeria. From this assertion, women librarians can work effectively to eradicate gender based violence if the victims open up and justice is meted on perpetrators by the judiciary system.

The strategies to eradicate gender based violence in Rivers State.

The study reveals that Women Librarians should encourage GBV victims to speak up and report to the appropriate institutions when victimized. This will make justice to be meted on the culprit. This is however contrary to the study of Fabunmi and Adepoju (2020) which states that the provision of equal access to education, health care and decent work environment will eradicate gender based violence. Women librarian can sensitize victims of gender based violence on the importance of speaking out when victimized.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Gender based violence is a serious issue in the society and needs urgent attention. The findings of the study have shown the various forms of gender based violence such as rape; sexual abuse and others. It also shows the roles women librarians can play in eradicating this menace in Rivers State, which include partnering with organization to eradicate this violence. From the study, there are various challenges militating against the eradication of these violence and these challenges can be curbed if the various strategies as identified in the study are implemented.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations were made:

1. Women librarians should sensitize the public through talk shows, workshops, seminars etc. on the dangers and aftermath of gender based violence. This would go a long way in curbing the menace of GBV.
2. Women librarians should partner with Organizations, NGOs and other Government agencies to implement good communication facilities that encourages, assists and aids GBV victims to speak up without fear.
3. Women librarians should partner with State Security Agencies to ensure that perpetrators of this evil act are brought to book: When culprits are prosecuted and brought to book,

others learn and know better than to engage in GBV. This drastically reduces the rate of GBV. Women librarians should collaborate with security agencies and human rights activists to ensure that perpetrators of GBV don't go unpunished.

4. Women librarians should believe and support Survivors of GBV. Victims of GBV are often times ignored and not believed when they speak up.

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