

International Federation of Women Lawyers and Domestic Conflict Management in Rivers State, Nigeria, 2010 – 2022

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Abstract

The study examined the role of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) in domestic conflict management in Rivers State, Nigeria, 2010-2022. FIDA, since its inception, has been involved in managing domestic violence against women in various communities. Domestic violence comes in different forms which can be verbal, physical, religious, economic or threats thereof; sexual abuse; emotional abuse; controlling or domineering; intimidation; stalking; passive/covert abuse, and economic deprivation. Definition, awareness, perception and documentation of domestic violence vary widely from place to place and have changed over time. Presently, domestic violence has become so common, but underreported because of cultural support. The study adopted feminist theory as its theoretical construct. The study relied on a triangulation method as a data-gathering technique. The analysis of primary data was produced through a structured questionnaire. The content analysis technique was used in the secondary data. The study unravelled that the culture of patriarchy, male chauvinism and anarchy has undermined the rights of women and the outcome of this is the exploitation and marginalization of women in the affairs of development both in the private and public spheres. Hence, the study recommends amongst others that government should establish and fund counselling centres at the community, and local government levels and employ professional counsellors to help victims of domestic violence.

Keywords: *domestic, feminism, FIDA, violence, women.*

Introduction

Globally, gender-based violence, which includes violence against women and domestic violence, affects all individuals, regardless of their gender, is significant and affects all individuals without discrimination. Nonetheless, violence against women and domestic violence are pervasive in Africa and beyond (Hahnkamper-Vandenbulcke and Bacian, 2022). It is mostly viewed as concealed occurrences on a global scale, domestic violence is a huge issue and one of the most prevalent human rights challenges and problems (Izugbara, Tikkanen, and Barron, 2014).

Nevertheless, the task of estimating the consequences of domestic violence has proven difficult due to several reasons. The availability of data is the first challenge to be considered. The ideal data set would be a long and representative panel with victim information related to a variety of violations and the well-being of victims and their children. Domestic violence datasets are usually restricted to self-reported surveys or police reports as the only available data source. Furthermore, in most countries, even such data cannot be combined with relevant results. A second challenge is the threat of identifying correlated, unobservable individuals, as families reporting family violence may have had worse or abnormal, even if domestic violence is not a factor (Bhuller, Dahl, Løken, and Mogstad, 2022).

According to Siemieniuk, Krentz, Gish and Gill, (2010), verbal, physical, religious, economic, or monetary abuse or threats thereof, as well as sexual, emotional, controlling, dominating, intimidating, stalking, passive/covert abuse (such as neglect), and economic hardship are all considered as domestic violence. Domestic abuse is a complex issue that has been defined and understood differently across time and in different cultures. As a result of societal acceptance, domestic violence is widespread in modern nations yet seldom reported. Although widely acknowledged, the societal issue of domestic abuse is often clouded by secrecy and silence. Both men and women are capable of perpetrating acts of domestic abuse. Men and women are equally capable of engaging in bullying behaviour. This means that both men and women may become victims of domestic abuse. On the other side, females are more often the targets of violence. Many women have severe health problems as a direct consequence of the psychological and/or physical abuse they experience in their intimate relationships and immediate social contexts.

Sadly, women have always been marginalized in every aspect of life, including political leadership, the economy and social life. The 2014 report from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) conveys a clear message: One in three women has experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 since sexual violence has been experienced by one in 10 women since the age of 15, and one in 20 women has been raped. Over one in five women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from either a current or a previous partner, and this is a significant number. While 43% of women have had some form of psychologically abusive and/or controlling behaviour while in a relationship (Hahnkamper-Vandenbulcke and Bacian, 2022).

In 2018, the World Economic Forum documented in a report that it could be 202 years (up to 2220) before the gender pay gap balances out with the current trend. In the past few decades, humanity has realized that the progress and development of society require coordinated efforts for gender equality and women empowerment (World Economic Forum (WEF), 2018). Children's rights are trampled every day. UNICEF report in 2018 stated that an estimated 6.3 million children and young adolescents died in 2017 alone, mostly from preventable causes (UNICEF, 2018). The implementation of gender-sensitive and child-friendly policies is underway, and a significant amount of effort is being devoted to promoting the growth of women and children.

However, the absence of relevant laws in Nigeria contributes to the country's pervasive problem of VAWG (violence against women and girls). After 14 years and a pervasive and deeply ingrained culture of silence and acceptance of VAWG, the Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Bill (VAPP) was finally approved. On average, 43% of men and 28% of women agree that a woman deserves to be beaten. Disturbing perspectives on violence, especially domestic abuse, may not always indicate insecurity, war, or instability. Because of this, many forms of violence, especially

those based on gender and inside the home, are commonplace in our modern societies. According to Rivera, the impacts of domestic violence go well beyond the obvious physical harm it causes, and may even have long-lasting consequences for a child's growth and development (Rivera, 2016). Domestic violence, in its many forms, is thus endemic in modern Nigerian culture. For the reason that domestic violence in modern Nigeria has deep-rooted structural causes and effects.

Many bad outcomes have resulted from Nigeria's ongoing war, including sluggish economic growth and development (Onifade, Imhonopi and Urim, 2013). For instance, a study conducted by HumAngle in 2022 indicates that Nigeria recorded 335 Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) cases from January to April 2022. Thus,

About 335 persons have experienced different forms of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in the first four months of 2022 across Nigeria. The 335 victims experience different types of violence: sexual abuse, physical abuse, and spousal abuse between January and April 2022. While the Northeast and Southeast regions have the lowest report on SGBV, the other zones have high records of SGBV. Leading the geopolitical zones in the reports of SGBV so far in 2022 is the Northwest with 266 persons, followed by the South-south with 50 persons, Southwest with 12, Southeast with four, and North-central with three. However, only the Northeast recorded one incident (Adedigba, 2022,p.1).

Given the above, "Nigeria was placed 139th out of 153 nations in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index for 2021, the lowest level since 2006"(Adedigba, 2022,p.2). One way to reduce the threat of VSS in Nigeria is to domesticate the Violence Against Persons Act, 2015 (ban), which aims to eradicate all forms of violence in both the private and public spheres and which includes the right to housing and other social assistance to the victims of violence.

In Rivers State, the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) has remained resolute in the fight against domestic violence against women. For instance, recently FIDA raised concerns about the increasing number of cases of teacher sexual abuse of their students in Rivers State. The Chairperson of FIDA in Rivers State, Adata Bio-Briggs disclosed that:

It is sad and disheartening that we have a lot of students that have been defiled by their caregivers and teachers. We presently have a case from Ahoada; a seven year-year-old child defiled by her teacher. We have another case of a child somewhere in Elelenwo that was also defiled by her teacher...We have another one in Rumuokuta, where the child was also defiled by her teacher. So, we have a lot of cases of teachers defiling people they are supposed to be caregivers to. This year alone, we have had more than 50 defilement issues. All the matters of children being defiled by their teachers have been charged to court (Naku, 2022,p.5)

The previous report from the Human Development Index for the states in the Niger Delta, states that Rivers State is 0.392, although it is 0.70 and 0.78 for other oil-producing states like Indonesia and Saudi Arabia, respectively (UNDP, 2015). Domestic violence has several root causes, some of the most prominent being instability, poverty, imbalance, ignorance, terrorism, conflict, and domestic hardship. Rivers State has been underdeveloped due to persistent damage and violence, government apathy, failed policies, and general negligence.

Women Lawyers who are admitted to practice law in Nigeria formed FIDA Nigeria in May 1982 to advocate for the rights of women and children. When discussing the mistreatment of women and children, as well as their general well-being, the unique nature of FIDA cannot be emphasised too strongly. Bringing attention to the issue of FGM and advocating for its elimination are both very important roles that FIDA plays.

It would be interesting to study the role of FIDA in domestic violence management in Rivers State to improve its efficacy in this field. The political frameworks, economic institutions, and security arrangements discussed in peace negotiations will not enable greater equality between men and women if the gender factor is not addressed in this discourse. This study posits that women are becoming active in peace activities via this medium, FIDA, because they want to maintain their community peaceful and since their contributions are typically underestimated and not easily assimilated or sought by many practitioners of peace-building. The aimed at examining the efforts made by the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) in Rivers State to combat domestic violence. The focus is on the dispute, conflict management, the founding of FIDA, FIDA's success/achievements in the last several years, and whether or not they have been successful in addressing domestic violence in Rivers State.

Conceptual Review

Domestic Violence

The issue of domestic violence has traditionally been portrayed as one that primarily affects women. It's not only women who suffer devastating consequences when domestic abuse occurs. In addition to the damage done to men, children, and society at large, domestic violence is met with substantial challenges by institutional organizations attempting to react to the issue. While the effects of domestic violence on victims are better recognized, abusers often face consequences, such as damaged relationships and legal ramifications. People of all ages, colours, ethnicities, financial backgrounds, sexual orientations, and religious views are susceptible to experiencing domestic abuse. Every socioeconomic and racial group is affected by the public health crisis which is domestic violence. Consequently, people everywhere are brainstorming ways to end the violence and provide victims of domestic abuse with safe places to go. Physical, sexual, verbal, and psychological attacks, as well as economic pressure, are all part of the definition of domestic violence as a "series of coercive and assaultive activities employed by adults or adolescents against an intimate partner" (Ganley and Schechter, 2014,p.3). As a pattern, and not just a single incident, domestic violence is pervasive and may take many forms. Instead, it's the pervasive and repeated use of power and control tactics including threats, intimidation, manipulation, and physical violence in an intimate relationship. Perpetrators may employ a single strategy or a combination of methods to control and intimidate their victims. The goals of an abuser's methods are to condition the abused into a certain pattern of compliance. Because the abuser often blames the

victim for his or her conduct, violent verbal and physical acts are often employed to alter or control the victim's behaviour. What we mean when we talk about domestic violence is the recurrent or chronic use of physical force against a family member or other person living in the same home. "Domestic abuse" and "domestic violence" are often used interchangeably with "intimate partner violence" (IPV). The phrase "family violence" encompasses a wide range of violent interactions between members of the same household, including but not limited to acts of child abuse, elder abuse, and spousal (Markowitz, 2012). There are at least two reasons why terms like "wife abuse," "wife beating," and "battering" have gone out of favour in recent years:

Many victims of domestic violence are not married to their abusers; instead, they live with them in some other kind of arrangement, such as cohabitation (Waits, 2012).

- Physical violence is not the only kind of abuse.
- Both men and women are victims of domestic violence; however, physical abuse happens far less often than other types of abuse.

Subsequently, other forms of abuse may lead to mental health problems, acts of self-harm, and even suicide attempts (Mayhew, Kowalczyk Mullins, Ding, Rosenthal, Zimet, Morrow, and Kahn, 2014). The United States Government's Office on Violence against Women (OVW) defined domestic violence as "a pattern of controlling and abusive conduct employed by one person in a relationship to acquire or maintain dominance over their other. Anyone, regardless of age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, or gender, is at risk for experiencing domestic violence "According to the definition, abuse comes in many forms, including but not limited to physical, sexual, emotional, financial, and psychological (Rennison and DeKeseredy, 2017). It has devastating impacts on children, people, families, and communities, and it is just as common in same- and mixed-gender couples. Abuse may come in many forms, including physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological. Examples of the latter include acts of intimidation, harassment, damage to property, threats, and monetary abuse (Domestic Violence Assessment Policy, 2012).

Conflict Management

The Latin word *conflictus*, from which we obtain the English word *conflict*, means "to strike together." "Conflict occurs whenever two or more actors perceive their interests as mutually incompatible and act based on that perception" (Ogele, 2023,p.23). Conflict management is a common and universal phenomenon. Every race reaches it differently because the law is a reflection of how people live (Ogele, 2022). Conflict management has "methods and procedures for addressing conflict(s)...including negotiation, mediation, arbitration, diplomacy and creative peace-building" (Ogele, 2021,p.72). Conflict management does not always involve avoiding, reducing, or terminating conflicts. It is about designing effective macro-level strategies to minimize conflict dysfunctions and improve the constructive functions of conflict to improve learning and efficiency in society. Conflict management is the identification and support of the steps necessary for transformation towards more sustainable and peaceful relations and governance structures, to avoid recurring into conflict states (United Nations, 2007). Conflict management is also seen as an attempt to quickly overcome the structural, relational, and cultural contradictions that are causing conflict, particularly in strong support for peace-making and peacekeeping. Peace-building has become an essential factor in the minds of all peace lovers. Hence, the call for all to

participate in making peace a reality. According to Swanstrom and Weissmann (2005), a successful conflict management technique involves the practice of outstanding conflict resolution.

Given the above, the following definition addresses all aspects of the issue of constructively handling disagreements, taking the initiative to resolve conflicts, and avoiding conflicts in the first place. According to Leffel, Hallam, and Darling (2012), "conflict management" does not mean putting a stop to a dispute but rather learning the strategies that will help mitigate its negative effects while maximizing its positive outcomes. An unchecked disagreement might cause people to withdraw from society and refuse to take part in collective activities or initiatives. Although fighting is an integral element of human interaction, a peaceful and prosperous society can only be achieved via effective conflict management and resolution. Therefore, conflict management is a crucial issue for any effective government to address. Conflict resolution relies heavily on the personality of a renowned negotiator and the establishment of a constructive communication style. Conflict is inevitable in human communities, but it need not derail progress toward desired ends if properly managed.

Conflict management refers to the processes put in place to steer arguments in the direction of productive activity for resolving workplace disputes. Consequently, effective conflict management is crucial for ensuring the best possible results when tensions arise. Some disputes have been effectively handled, even if violence and intractable conflict are destined to remain a large and sad element of the human experience. Understanding and resolving disputes are two of the most important aspects of conflict management. Conflict management is an approach that aims to reduce and avoid future violence by promoting desirable behavioural modifications in the persons involved. Conflict management techniques are the internal processes used by different authorities to handle issues without really eliminating them. Although the literature sometimes uses the words interchangeably, it is important to remember that conflict management and conflict resolution are distinct processes. To effectively manage conflicts, it is important to first acknowledge their existence and then create and execute mechanisms for dealing with them.

Theoretical Underpinning

Liberal Feminism

The study relied on Feminist theory as its theoretical underpinning. In 1837, 'feminism' was first used by Charles Fourier. Proponents of this school of thought include Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), Betty Friedan (1921-2006), and Rebecca Walker (1969). Liberal feminists in the 18th and 19th centuries advocated for gender equality and the advancement of women via education. Mary Wollstonecraft, an early activist for women's rights, wrote a book titled "Vindication of Women's Rights," in which she discussed several aspects of women's rights (1792). The ideals of liberty, equality, and brotherhood established during the French Revolution had a profound impact on her. John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869) is a landmark text in the fight for women's emancipation. He helped in the movement to have more women run for office in Parliament. Theorizing women's subjugation is central to feminism. The goals of feminism are to identify oppression, analyze its causes and effects, and provide solutions to free women from their enslavement (Tong, 2009). Feminist philosophy raises numerous controversial

topics, including discrimination, sexual justification, oppression, and patriarchy. Feminism is a contemporary social and political movement inspired by the lived experiences of women worldwide. It's predicated on the idea that societal standards that put men ahead of women in every way conceivable cause discrimination against women in both the workplace and the home. Feminism is any social, cultural, or economic movement that promotes women's equality and the preservation of their rights. Feminism is an ideology that advocates for equal rights for women in all spheres of society, including the political, social, and economic. These privileges provide people with a voice in public affairs, economic transactions, and judicial matters, elevating their status in the community. Women's rights in all their complexity are addressed.

"Women's liberation and movement are at stake because it is women who are harmed, oppressed, and subjugated; women's consciousness changed to see oppression for what it was, and to see that it was not inevitable or natural and that it could be challenged; women's consciousness changed to see oppression for what it was, and to see that it was not inescapable or natural and that it could be challenged; women's consciousness changed to see oppression for what it (Thompson, 2001).

For liberals, it's not about women getting preferential treatment, but about ending all forms of prejudice and bias, including those based on gender. To achieve economic parity and provide women access to higher-paying professions, liberal feminists would fight to eradicate obstacles that prevent women from having equal access to information technology and employment. According to feminist thinker Giddens (2001), "gender inequality is established through reducing access for women and girls to civil rights and distribution of social resources such as education and employment." Patriarchy is a socially manufactured idea that encourages gender inequality, and it is mostly responsible for this problem. Liberal feminism is rooted in the liberal political thought of the Enlightenment and is founded on the principles of individual freedom, human rights, citizenship without discrimination, and representative government (Tong, 2009). Liberal feminism is relevant to this study because it seeks to ensure that men and women are treated equally under the law. Furthermore, it encourages women to realize and keep their power by acting on their own will and making their own decisions such as reproductive rights, voting rights, education, fair pay, and health care were just some of the issues addressed.

Methodology

The study adopted a triangulation method of data-gathering techniques. The primary data are generated through the distribution of a questionnaire to our respondents and oral interview. The study relied on one hundred and sixty (160) questionnaires to generate the needed information through random sampling techniques. Open and close-ended structured questionnaire technique was employed to obtain the needed information. 20 respondents were interviewed to complement the questionnaire. The secondary data were obtained from published and unpublished intellectual properties, the publications of the Local Government Council, International Journals and Google. A simple percentage was used to analyze the data generated from the distribution of the questionnaires.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The data presentation and analysis the results collected from questionnaires are presented through simple percentage used in analysing the demographic information

Bio data of respondents

Table 1 gender of respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	60	60.0	60.0	60.0
Female	100	100.0	100.0	160.0
Total	160	160.0	160.0	

Source: field survey, 2023.

Table 2 age grade of respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid below 17years	25	25.0	25.0	25.0
18-20years	25	25.0	25.0	50.0
21-30years	40	40.0	40.0	90.0
31-40years	10	10.0	10.0	100.0
41-50years	20	20.0	20.0	120.0
above 50years	40	40.0	40.0	160.0
Total	160	160.0	160.0	

Source: field survey, 2023.

The age grade of the respondents included in this investigation is shown in Table 2. Twenty-five responders, or 25.0 per cent of the population, are under the age of seventeen. 25 people, or 25.0 per cent of the population, are between the ages of 18 and 20. 40 people, or 40.0 per cent of the population, are between the ages of 21 and 30. Ten respondents, or 10% of the population, are between the ages of 31 and 40. 20 respondents, or 20.0 per cent of the population, are between the ages of 41 and 50, whereas 40 respondents, or 40.0 per cent of the population, are above 50.

Table 3 marital status of respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Single	70	70.0	70.0	70.0
Married	40	40.0	40.0	110.0
Divorced	25	25.0	25.0	135.0
Widowed	25	25.0	25.0	160.0
Total	160	160.0	160.0	

Source: field survey, 2023.

Table 3 above shows the marital status of respondents used for the survey

70 respondents representing 70.0 percent of the population are single. 40 respondents representing 40.0 per cent of the population are married. 5 respondents representing 5 percent of the population are divorced while 25 respondents representing 25 percent of the population are widowed.

Table 4 Domestic violence is the most prevalent form of gender based violence

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly agree	90	90.0	90.0	90.0
Agree	25	25.0	25.0	115.0
Undecided	5	5.0	5.0	120.0
Disagree	15	15.0	15.0	135.0
Strongly disagree	25	25.0	25.0	160.0
Total	160	160.0	160.0	

Source: field survey, 2023.

Table 4 shows the responses of respondents that Domestic Violence is the most prevalent form of gender based violence.

90 respondents representing 90.0 percent strongly agree that Domestic Violence is the most prevalent form of gender based violence. 25 respondents representing 25.0 percent agree that Domestic Violence is the most prevalent form of gender based violence. 5 respondents representing 5.0 percent were undecided. 15 respondents representing 15.0 percent disagree that

Domestic Violence is the most prevalent form of gender based violence while the remaining 25 of the respondents representing 25.0 percent strongly disagrees that Domestic Violence is the most prevalent form of gender based violence.

Table 5 indicated women facing domestic violence usually agonize from physical and physiological effects, which adversely impact their behaviour and productivity in their homes, communities and workplaces.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly agree	90	90.0	90.0	90.0
Agree	25	25.0	25.0	115.0
Undecided	5	5.0	5.0	120.0
Disagree	15	15.0	15.0	135.0
strongly disagree	25	25.0	25.0	160.0
Total	160	160.0	160.0	

Source: field survey, 2023.

Table 5 shows that women facing domestic violence suffer both physical and physiological effects, which undermine productivity in their homes, communities and workplaces. 90 respondents representing 90.0 percent strongly agree that women facing domestic violence suffer both physical and physiological effects, which undermine productivity in their homes, communities and workplaces. 25 respondents representing 25.0 percent agree that women facing domestic violence suffer both physical and physiological effects, which undermine productivity in their homes,

communities and workplaces. 5 percent were undecided. 15 respondents representing 15.0 percent disagrees that women facing domestic violence suffer both physical and physiological effects, which undermine productivity in their homes, communities and workplaces. While the remaining 25 of the respondents representing 25 percent strongly disagrees that women facing domestic violence suffer both physical and physiological effects, which undermine productivity in their homes, communities and workplaces.

Table 6 There is a significant effect of domestic violence on women of Rivers State

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly agree	90	90.0	90.0	90.0
Agree	25	25.0	25.0	115.0
Undecided	5	5.0	5.0	120.0
Disagree	15	15.0	15.0	135.0
strongly disagree	25	25.0	25.0	160.0
Total	160	160.0	160.0	

Source: field survey, 2023.

Table 6 shows the responses of respondents that there is a significant effect of Domestic Violence and insecurity on women of Rivers state. 90 respondents representing 90.0 percent strongly agree that there is a significant effect of Domestic Violence and insecurity on women of Rivers state. 25 respondents representing 25.0 percent agree that there is a significant effect of Domestic Violence and insecurity on women of Rivers state. 5 respondents representing 5 percent were undecided. 15 respondents representing 15.0 percent disagrees that there is a significant effect of Domestic Violence and insecurity on women of Rivers state while the remaining 25 of the respondents representing 25 percent strongly disagree that there is a significant effect of Domestic Violence and insecurity on women of Rivers state.

Table 7 indicate domestic violence can lead to breakdown of communication leading to separation and divorce of partners, which adversely impact the children psychologically.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly agree	80	80.0	80.0	80.0
Agree	50	50.0	50.0	130.0
Undecided	15	15.0	15.0	145.0
Disagree	10	10.0	10.0	155.0
strongly agree	5	5.0	5.0	160.0
Total	160	160.0	160.0	

Source: field survey, 2023.

Table 7 shows the responses of respondents that domestic violence can lead to breakdown of communication leading to separation and divorce of partners, which adversely impact the children psychologically. 50 respondents representing 50.0 percent strongly agree that domestic violence can lead to breakdown of communication leading to separation and divorce of partners, which adversely impact the children psychologically. 30 respondents representing 30.0 percent agree that

domestic violence can lead to breakdown of communication leading to separation and divorce of partners, which adversely impact the children psychologically. 5 respondents representing 5 percent were undecided. 10 respondents representing 10.0 percent disagrees that domestic violence can lead to breakdown of communication leading to separation and divorce of partners, which adversely impact the children psychologically while the remaining 5 of the respondents representing 5 percent strongly disagrees that domestic violence can lead to breakdown of communication leading to separation and divorce of partners, which adversely impact the children psychologically.

Table 8 indicates the international federation of women lawyers has been able to manage domestic violence in rivers state.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly agree	100	100.0	100.0	100.0
Agree	30	30.0	30.0	130.0
Undecided	15	15.0	15.0	145.0
Disagree	10	10.0	10.0	155.0
strongly disagree	5	5.0	5.0	160.0
Total	160	160.0	160.0	

Source: field survey, 2023.

Table 8 shows the responses of respondents that the international federation of women lawyers has been able to manage Domestic Violence in Rivers state.

100 respondents representing 100.0 percent strongly agree that the international federation of women lawyers has been able to manage Domestic Violence in Rivers state.

30 respondents representing 30.0 percent agree that the international federation of women lawyers has been able to manage Domestic Violence in Rivers state. 15 respondents representing 15.0 percent were undecided. 10 respondents representing 10.0 percent disagrees that the international federation of women lawyers has been able to manage Domestic Violence in Rivers state. While the remaining 5 of the respondents representing 5.0 percent strongly disagrees that the international federation of women lawyers has been able to manage Domestic Violence in Rivers state.

Table 9 indicates that children who often see domestic violence are prone to apply such act at school or other places in reaction to perceived danger, hence commit crimes.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly agree	90	90.0	90.0	90.0
Agree	25	25.0	25.0	115.0
Undecided	5	5.0	5.0	120.0
Disagree	15	15.0	15.0	135.0
strongly disagree	25	25.0	25.0	160.0
Total	160	160.0	160.0	

Source: field survey, 2023.

Table 9 shows that children who often see domestic violence are prone to apply such act at school or other places in reaction to perceived danger, hence commit crimes.

90 respondents representing 90.0 percent strongly agree that children who often see domestic violence are prone to apply such act at school or other places in reaction to perceived danger, hence commit crimes. 25 respondents representing 25.0 percent agree that children who often see domestic violence are prone to apply such act at school or other places in reaction to perceived danger, hence commit crimes. 5 respondents representing 5 percent were undecided. 15 respondents representing 15.0 percent disagrees that children who often see domestic violence are prone to apply such act at school or other places in reaction to perceived danger, hence commit crimes while the remaining 25 of the respondents representing 25 percent strongly disagree that children who often see domestic violence are prone to apply such act at school or other places in reaction to perceived danger, hence commit crimes.

Table 10 indicates that violence against women both physical and sexual are usually carried out against women and children in their communities.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly agree	90	90.0	90.0	90.0
Agree	25	25.0	25.0	115.0
Undecided	5	5.0	5.0	120.0
Disagree	15	15.0	15.0	135.0
strongly agree	25	25.0	25.0	160.0
Total	160	160.0	160.0	

Source: field survey, 2023.

Table 10 shows that violence against women both physical and sexual are usually carried out against women and children in their communities.

90 respondents representing 90.0 percent strongly agree that violence against women both physical and sexual are usually carried out against women and children in their communities. 25 respondents representing 25.0 percent agree that violence against women both physical and sexual are usually carried out against women and children in their communities. 5 respondents representing 5 percent were undecided. 15 respondents representing 15.0 percent disagrees that violence against women both physical and sexual are usually carried out against women and children in their communities while the remaining 25 of the respondents representing 25 percent strongly disagrees that violence against women both physical and sexual are usually carried out against women and children in their communities.

Discussion of Findings

❖ The International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) and Domestic Violence in Rivers State

It is critical to communicate the study's findings, particularly about FIDA and domestic violence in Rivers state, based on our findings. According to data analysis and findings from prior studies, violence against women has persisted in our culture. Domestic abuse took the lives of almost 60% of metropolitan women in a variety of cities. Tjaden and Thoennes (1995) found the same thing in their study on the prevalence of violence against women. Male dominance, gender inequity, male superiority over females, female economic dependency on males, and the assumption that females are perceived as the inferior sex have all been recognized as contributing causes of violence against women. This is consistent with Ezeh and Gage's (1998) assertion that women's economic dependency on males, patriarchy, and women's position has continued to aid the perpetration of violence against women, which cuts across social, economic, and cultural lines, and the Rivers woman's case is no exception.

Findings show that the majority of the respondents believe that culture permits it. A female respondent in Rivers State supported the above when she stated that “our culture permits it, and that is the major reason for not giving punishment to men who engage in this practice. I’ve seen it happen to my grandmother and my mother, it is like a normal thing” (Regina Audu, female, 30 years, typist).

The study also identified different forms of violence against women including wife beating, female genital mutilation, early marriage, rape, trafficking in women, forced prostitution, sexual harassment and humiliation. This agrees with the finding of Ezeilo and Ohia (2016) in Nigeria. A study conducted by Ezeilo and Ohia (2016), showed that different forms of violence against women include flogging/brutalization, beating, sexual harassment, rape, widowhood practice, maltreatment, intimidation and humiliation. This was also concluded by the words of a respondent that “we get more than 100 cases of domestic violence, rape and child abuse in our hotline on a daily, let’s say weekly basis but most of them are scared of coming forward to report this individual due to fear and stigmatization” (Vivian Akunesiobike, member of FIDA,34 years)

❖ **FIDA and management of Domestic Violence in Rivers state**

In response to the problem of violence against women and girls and its wide-ranging implications, many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have sought to design and implement interventions that address the problem (Stanley, 2012). FIDA has been at the forefront of this, amongst other NGOs.

FIDA has been contributing necessary judicial backing that would support the effective domestication of the “Violence against Persons Bill” being tackled by the Rivers House of Assembly. The association through its branches advocates for the enactment of laws that promotes equal opportunities and prohibits violence in the states where there are no provisions of gender-based laws. They have also created Haven, a temporary shelter for victims of domestic violence. Monthly sensitization is done in communities around Rivers state, for example, the one carried out in Rumuokrushi Community on Thursday the 26th of September 2019 led by the Chairperson Pst. Ngozi Ighosevbe.

FIDA uses alternative dispute resolution to settle family conflicts. A respondent from FIDA buttressed that:

in cases of domestic violence, our first response is typically to try mediating, going to court for us is always the last resort if we can resolve such issues using alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and we also let the victims know that using the court

is also our last resort to make matters end amicably There are many solutions to a problem and so it is not only beating the woman that can solve the problem but dialogue can be used in correcting a woman when she misbehaves.” (Blessing Esigie, member of FIDA, 40 Years)

Another respondent stated that:

We do follow-up usually every six months and couples are also advised to call our official lines in case of emergency or when the matter rises again. We also employ the use of both conflict resolution and conflict management in our approach to ending or managing domestic conflict cases brought before us. Also, methods used include mediation, Caucusing (speaking and advising the parties involved separately), Visiting, Inviting family members, agreement to be signed by both parties to maintain peace and harmony, Petition to Police, File a complaint for failure to supply necessities to court if mediation fails (Barr Esther Achor, FIDA member, 32 years).

❖ **Challenges that hamper FIDA’s efforts in conflict resolution in Rivers State.**

According to French and Bell (1999), for a conflict management approach to be successful, all parties involved must be willing to participate actively in the entire process.

The interviewees were asked to identify the elements that hampered their ability to manage conflict. One of the primary factors they noticed was culture. Culture played a critical influence in the management of conflict in society, according to the interviewees' comments. According to Swanstom and Weissmann(2005), the majority of respondents viewed patriarchal culture to be the most important element influencing conflict management. Some of the respondents affirmed this statement in their comments. For instance, one commented that “...the culture in this society is such that, when there is a misunderstanding between the husband and wife, it becomes very difficult to get them on a common platform to handle the problem.” The above quotation points to the notion that a society’s beliefs, values, norms and practices could be associated with conflict management in the organization because the culture may hinder or promote the management of conflicts.

Even if there are basic protections protecting individuals from violence, the Nigerian court system does not particularly provide any protection for women or men against domestic abuse. Domestic Violence Laws, which have been issued by a few states in Nigeria, are relatively new, and many people are unaware of them, necessitating intensive sensitization and awareness building about their existence. The Nigerian legal system, on the other hand, is often hostile to domestic abuse victims. Even though the Criminal Code and Penal Code establish consequences for assault, they contain discriminatory clauses that allow the accused to avoid punishment. For example, the Penal Code section 55 (10 (d)19 allows a husband to discipline an 'erring' wife, allowing for wife beating, yet the Criminal Code considers assault on a woman to be a misdemeanour while attack on a man is a felony. Furthermore, women would not want to report or take such spouses to court because it could lead to the dissolution of the marriage and the fury of family members. The police also do not take such crimes seriously because they are considered personal. According to one of the respondents,

Government should sensitize people on the issue and preach against it, government should make wider their sensitization project to the rural areas, electronic and print

media so that people who are likely to take to such act may have the need not to take to violence” (male, 47 years, legal practitioner, urban respondent).

❖ **Several strategies in resolving conflicts in Rivers State by FIDA**

According to FIDA, until every Nigerian accepts that violence committed in private affairs is not friendly violence, then we are not going anywhere in the elimination of violence against women (FIDA,2020).

FIDA has implored several strategies to mitigate conflict situations. FIDA provides free legal services to women and children; operates a massive legal education outreach program to communities, organizations and schools; produces publications to promote legal literacy; and organizes seminars, workshops and conferences. Respondents from FIDA argued that:

we work with some other NGOs like doctors without Borders and the police to address these issues of domestic violence every day. We also use the child rights law to deal with cases of child sexual abuse. Not only that we work with Primary and secondary schools in the state to get cases of rape and child abuse (Emmanuella Oto, FIDA member, 45 years)

Through greater awareness and engagement on the issue across sectors, community leaders, policymakers and practitioners can work together to address the underlying drivers of domestic violence, as well as strengthen prevention and support efforts for survivors. Women are advised to break the culture of silence when violated.

Conclusion

The study analysed the roles of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (IFWL) in handling domestic violence cases in Rivers State from 2010 to 2022. Several initiatives have been launched by individuals and women's organisations to abolish the uneven power relation that results in the unequal allocation of rights and advantages to women. Feminism in Nigeria grew out of women's calls for equal rights and the end of discrimination. Threats to women's safety increase when they share a home with an angry man who relatively acts irrationally. When women are abused, it affects not just the victim but also her offspring, parents, and the larger community. Besides, victimized women are unable to make meaningful contributions to society when they experience violence regularly. Violence against women exists, and society as a whole must take immediate and permanent action to combat this problem or risk disintegration. The issue of domestic violence in Nigeria has grown into a major problem for the country's leaders and citizens. The unstoppable official corruption, high unemployment rate, economic crises, pauperization of the population, crumbling infrastructure, and fruitless national integration effort have all contributed to a tense social and political climate. The results from the survey indicate that the International Federation of Women's Lawyers adopts a feminist stance that places a premium on women's and girls' empowerment. As a consequence, institutions (whether they concentrate on women specifically or implement universal interventions) are paying more attention to women's rights and empowerment. Organizations do not see gender equality as a side problem unrelated to their core missions. Instead of acting from a set of preconceived notions about what constitutes

"acceptable" positions for women, they instead base their decisions on an awareness of the constraints that women face because of their gender.

Recommendations

- The government should establish and fund counselling centres at the community, and local government levels and employ professional counsellors to help victims of domestic violence
- The public should be educated about the negative impacts of domestic violence on women through the media.
- Churches and mosques could host seminars and outreach programs where trained counsellors can educate the public on the need for a violence-free society, with the home as its cradle.
- To assist victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, the government should develop and fund counselling centres at the community and local government levels, as well as employ professional counsellors.
- It is necessary to determine the moral ideals and ethical virtues that should govern Nigerian conduct and behaviour. These principles should be based on human dignity, respect for human life, and the people's right to life, liberty, and security; freedom of worship, religion, thinking, and conscience; and freedom of expression.

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