

# Research Report On Prevalence Of Sexual And Gender-Based Violence Among Married Couples In Lagos During Covid-19 Lockdown Period.



**RESEARCH REPORT ON  
PREVALENCE OF SEXUAL AND  
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AMONG  
MARRIED COUPLES IN LAGOS  
DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN  
PERIOD**

**BY:**

**WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND HEALTH PROJECT  
(WRAHP)**

**FUNDED BY: ACTIONAID NIGERIA & GLOBAL  
AFFAIRS CANADA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research work showcases the linkage between sexual and gender-based violence among married couples in Lagos State during the COVID-19 lockdown. The study is also anticipated to support policy recommendations to Women Rights Organizations, Civil Society Organizations, Government Organizations, and Multilaterals on relevant strategies to adopt post-COVID-19 era in combating sexual and gender-based violence among women and young girls in Nigeria.

Data for this research was collected via online monkey survey tool and phone calls. A total of 374 anonymous respondents were reached from 8th April, 2020 to 31st May, 2020 within Lagos State. The data collected was analyzed using an excel spreadsheet.

Respondents reported that having observed 10.43% of children under the care of a guardian to have experienced physical and sexual abuse during the COVID-19 Lockdown period. Also, 12.05% reported that they were beaten by their spouse in the previous one or two weeks earlier while approximately 9.63% of the respondents also reported that staying at home during the COVID-19 Lockdown period could increase their vulnerability to gender-based violence. Also, 5.88% of female respondents reported being coerced into sexual activity by their spouse during the COVID-19 Lockdown period.

The most preferred channel of reporting for sexual and gender-based violence by respondents were Non-Governmental Organizations (34.22%), with Community Leader (26.74%) being the second preferred channel, and The Police (26.47%) the third preferred channel.

Furthermore, respondents recommended the provision of free medical and psycho-social support to survivors (35.56%) was the most preferred support services for SGBV survivors, while provision of free temporary shelter for survivors (24.60%) was second, and provision of financial assistance to help survivors establish their businesses (19.52%) was the third.

The results of the survey revealed that there might be a linkage between prevalence of gender-based violence and Lockdown restriction among couples. Also, the responses received showed that gender-based violence is one of the negative social impact of lockdown. During pandemics and social lockdown, women are more susceptible to violence and violence perpetrated against women tends to increase during such period.

## INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization, Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered strain of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The disease was first identified on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019 in Wuhan, the capital of China's Hubei province, and has since spread globally.

Violence against women remains a major global public health and women's health threat during emergencies. According to The World Health Organisation, globally, 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced physical and or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence by any perpetrator in their lifetime. These figures are mirrored in Nigeria, with 30 per cent of girls and women aged between 15 and 49 reported to have experienced sexual abuse. It has also been reported that Violence against women tends to increase during every type of emergency, including epidemics.

According to a recent report in China, the number of domestic violence cases reported to a police station in Jingzhou, a city in Hubei Province, China tripled in February 2020, compared to the same period the previous year.

The health impacts of violence, particularly intimate partner or domestic violence, on women and their children, are significant. Violence against women can result in injuries and serious physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health problems, including sexually transmitted infections, HIV, and unplanned pregnancies.

Stress, the disruption of social and protective networks, and decreased access to services all can exacerbate the risk of violence for women. As distancing measures are put in place and people are encouraged to stay at home, the risk of intimate partner violence is likely to increase.

Therefore, the risks of violence that women and their children face during the current COVID-19 crisis cannot be ignored.

On 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2020, The President of the Federal Government of Nigeria, imposed a mandatory two weeks lockdown in Lagos, Ogun and Federal Capital Territory as a response mechanism to curtail the fast spreading Coronavirus in these three States and in Nigeria.

Following this directive, Women's Rights and Health Project (WRAHP) with support from ActionAid Nigeria and Global Affairs Canada developed an online survey to assess the prevalence of sexual and

gender-based violence among residents of Lagos State during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period. This research was implemented with funding supported provided by ActionAid.

## **Research Objectives:**

The specific objectives of this research include:

- To assess the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence among married couples living in Lagos during COVID-19 Lockdown period.
- To enable women to continue to enjoy protection of the Law.
- To strengthen WRAHP's referral systems and protocols for responding to sexual and gender-based violence.

## **Research Methodology:**

The research employed Quantitative Research Method using online Monkey survey tool which were administered via phone calls and shared via WRAHP's social media platform on 8th April, 2020 and was concluded on 31st May, 2020 for residents in Lagos.

The survey comprised of 10 questions covering respondents' gender, location, vulnerability to gender-based violence, experience about various types of gender-based violence cases, recommendations on sexual and gender-based violence reporting agencies and services that should be rendered to survivors.

Five representative staff members from Women's Rights and Health Project volunteered to administer the questionnaires via mobile phone calls to a diverse and all-inclusive group comprising of: Representative members of Christian Association of Nigeria(CAN), Community Development Committee (CDC), Progressive Association of Hairdressers, Beauticians and Barbers (PROHAB), Islamic Group, Market Women Group, National Union of Tailors (NUT), Lagos State Council of Tradesmen and Artisans (LASCOTA), All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN), People Living With Disability Group and National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN), across Agbado-Okeodo, Alimosho, Ayobo-Ipaja, Egbe-Idimu, Igando-Ikotun, and Mosan-Okunola LCDAs and Eti-Osa Local Government Area. Data collected were analyzed using an excel spreadsheet.

## **RESULTS**

The results of the survey revealed that:

- A total of 374 respondents participated in the survey, 50% were females and 50% were males.
- Respondents reported that a significant percentage of children (10.43%) under the care of a guardian experienced physical and sexual abuse during the COVID-19 Lockdown period.
- Due to the COVID-19 Lockdown situation, staying at home during this period with their spouse could bring about domestic violence, 12.57% of couples provided us with feedback about this experience. Similarly, 12.05% reported that they were beaten by their spouse in the previous one or two weeks earlier.
- Approximately 9.63% of the respondents also reported that staying at home during the COVID-19 Lockdown period could increase their vulnerability to gender-based violence.
- Also, 5.88% of respondents disclosed being coerced into sexual activity by their spouse during the COVID-19 Lockdown period.
- Furthermore, 14.97% of the respondents indicated having witnessed one or more neighbors quarreling with or beating their husband/wife due to a disagreement or lack of provision of basic needs for the family during the lockdown period.
- The most preferred channel of reporting for sexual and gender-based violence by respondents was Non-Governmental Organizations (34.22%), with Community Leader (26.74%) being the second preferred channel, and The Police (26.47%) the third preferred channel.
- Provision of free medical and psycho-social support to survivors (35.56%) was the topmost recommended support services for SGBV survivors, while provision of free temporary shelter for survivors (24.60%) was second, and provision of financial assistance to help survivors establish their businesses (19.52%) was the third.

**TABLE 1.0 RESULTS OF SURVEY RESPONSE 31 MAY, 2020, TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 374**

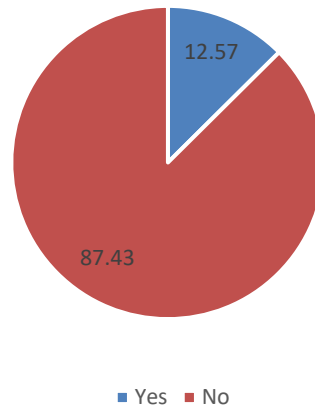
QUESTION	PARAMETER	POLLED ONLINE RESPONSE (n1=99)	SURVEY RESPONSE VIA PHONE CALLS (n2 = 275)	FREQUENCY (N = n1+n2= 374)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Q1. My sex is	Female	48	139	187	50.00



	Male	51	136	187	50.00
	Others	0	0	0	0.00
Q2. I live in	Lagos	99	275	374	100.00
	Another State in Nigeria	0	0	0	0.00
Q3. Staying at home for long hours with my husband/wife makes me more likely to commit domestic violence.	Yes	4	43	47	12.57
	No	95	232	327	87.43
Q4. Staying at home during this period increases my vulnerability to abuse/violence from my husband/wife.	Yes	4	32	36	9.63
	No	95	243	338	90.37
Q5. My husband/wife has beaten me up, slapped or hit me in the past one or two weeks due to a disagreement we had.	Yes	0	45	45	12.03
	No	99	230	329	87.97
Q6. My husband/wife forcefully had sexual intercourse with me even when I provided him/her with cogent reasons for refusal in the past one/two weeks.	Yes	1	21	22	5.88
	No	98	254	352	94.12
Q7. I have witnessed one or more neighbors quarreling with or beating their husband/wife due to a disagreement or lack of provision of basic needs for the family in the past one/two weeks.	Yes	17	39	56	14.97
	No	82	236	318	85.03
Q8. I have witnessed a young girl or boy kept under the care of a guardian being maltreated, molested or raped in the past one/two weeks.	Yes	6	33	39	10.43
	No	93	242	335	89.57
Q9. Which of the following would you find easier to report to if you experience or witness incidents of gender-based violence such as rape, domestic violence, sexual assault, battery, sexual harassment, neglect etc. Please rank the following on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being your most preferred	Police	29	70	99	26.47
	NGO (E.G WRAHP)	32	96	128	34.22
	Government Agency (DSVRT)	17	10	27	7.22
	Religious leader	12	8	20	5.35
	Community leader	9	91	100	26.74
Q10. Which of the following support services would you recommend to be provided to survivors of gender-based violence at this time? Please rank the services on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being your most preferred service.	Providing free temporary shelter for survivors	50	42	92	24.60
	Providing financial assistance to help survivors establish their own businesses	14	59	73	19.52
	Providing survivors with free skills acquisition programmes	7	42	49	13.10
	Providing free legal services to enable survivors access justice	9	18	27	7.22
	Providing free medical and psycho-social support to survivors (including counselling)	19	114	133	35.56

**Question 3:** Staying at home for long hours with my husband/wife makes me more likely to commit domestic violence.

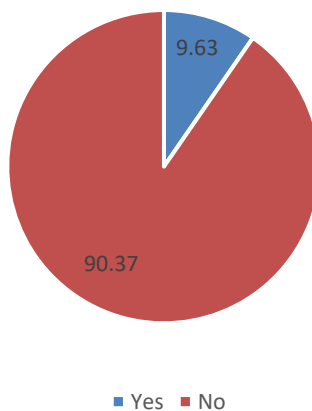
**Figure 1: Response on staying at home for long hours with my husband/wife makes me more likely to commit domestic violence.**



12.57% of survey respondents disclosed that staying at home for long hours with their husband/wife make them more likely to commit domestic violence.

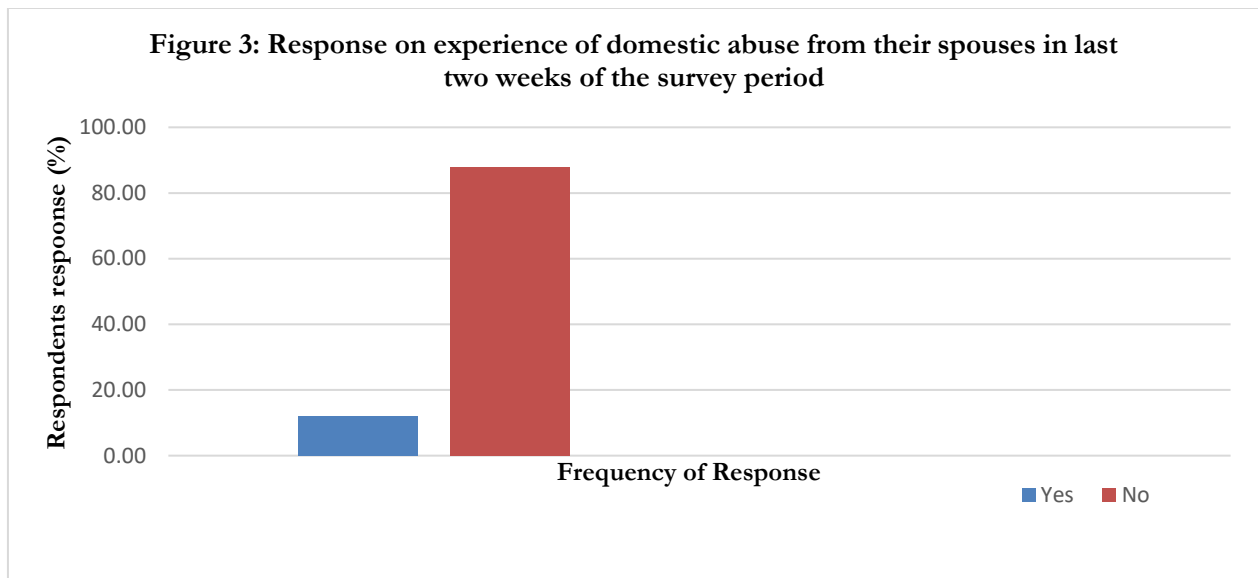
**Question 4:** Staying at home during this period increases my vulnerability to abuse/violence from my husband/wife.

**Figure 2: Response on Staying at home during this period increases my vulnerability to abuse/violence from my husband/wife**



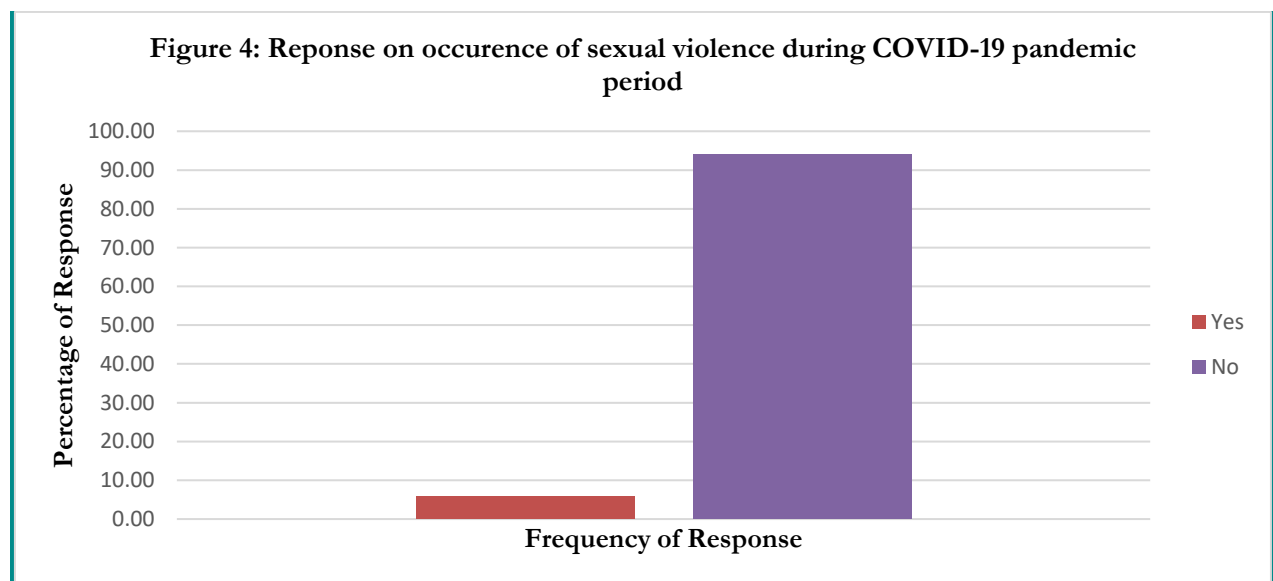
9.63% of the respondents reported that staying at home during the lockdown increase their vulnerability to abuse/violence from their partner.

**Question 5:** My husband/wife has beaten me up, slapped or hit me in the past one or two weeks due to a disagreement we had.



12.03% of respondents reported having experienced domestic abuse within the last two weeks of the research period.

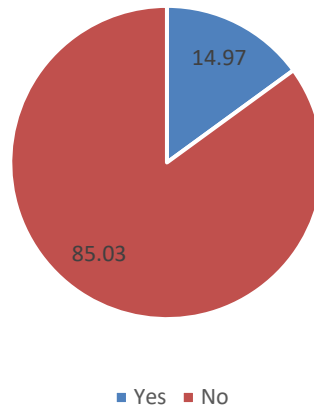
**Question 6:** My husband/wife forcefully had sexual intercourse with me even when I provided him/her with cogent reasons for refusal in the past one/two weeks.



5.88% of respondents disclosed being coerced into sexual activity by their spouse during the COVID-19 Lockdown period.

**Question 7:** I have witnessed one or more neighbors quarreling with or beating their husband/wife due to a disagreement or lack of provision of basic needs for the family in the past one/two weeks.

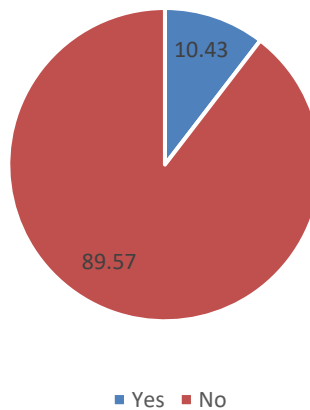
**Figure 5: Response on respondents who witnessed neighbours who experience domestic violence during lockdown**



14.97% of the respondents indicated having witnessed one or more neighbors quarreling with or beating their husband/wife due to a disagreement or lack of provision of basic needs for the family during the lockdown period.

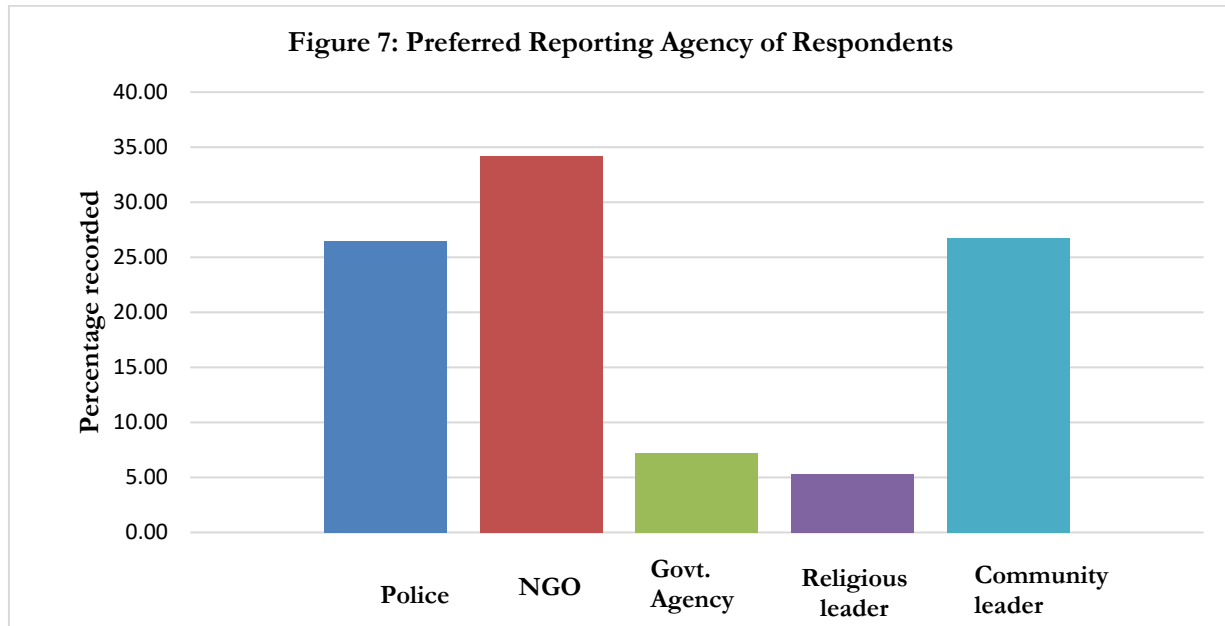
**Question 8:** I have witnessed a young girl or boy kept under the care of a guardian being maltreated, molested or raped in the past one/two weeks.

**Figure 6: Response on respondents who witnessed a child under the care of a guardian being maltreated, molested or raped during the lockdown**



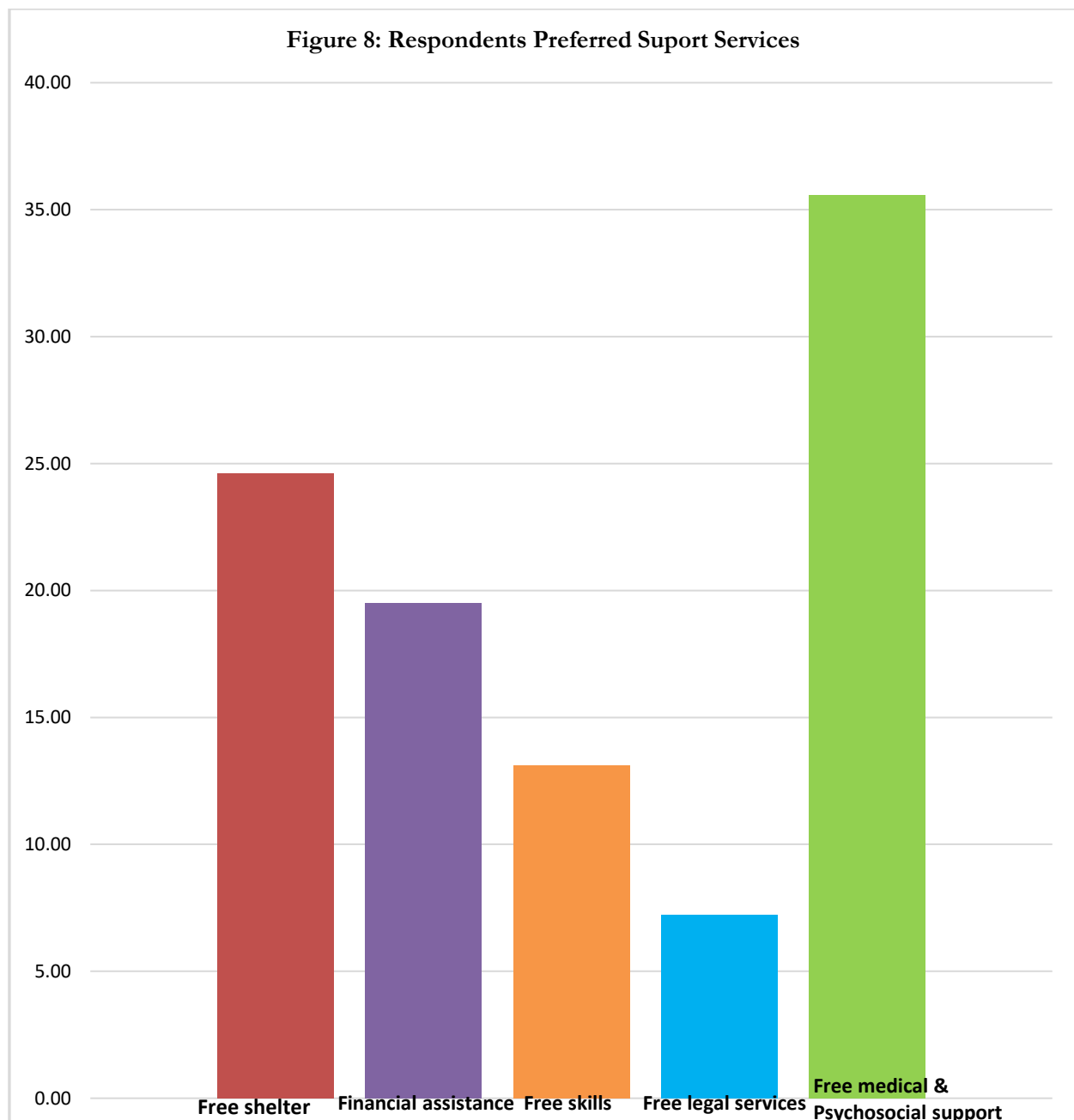
10.43% of respondents reported to have witnessed a young boy or girl kept under the care of a guardian being maltreated, molested or raped within one or two weeks of the survey.

**Question 9:** Which of the following would you find easier to report to if you experience or witness incidents of gender-based violence such as rape, domestic violence, sexual assault, battery, sexual harassment, neglect etc. Please rank the following on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being your most preferred.



32.22% of the respondents indicated the most preferred channel of reporting for sexual and gender-based violence by respondents was Non-Governmental Organizations, with Community Leader (26.74%) being the second preferred channel, and The Police (26.47%) the third preferred channel.

**Question 10:** Which of the following support services would you recommend to be provided to survivors of gender-based violence at this time? Please rank the services on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being your most preferred service.



Provision of free medical and psycho-social support to survivors (35.56%) was the topmost recommended support services for SGBV survivors, while provision of free temporary shelter for survivors (24.60%) was second, and provision of financial assistance to help survivors establish their businesses (19.52%) was the third

The results of the survey revealed that there exists a linkage between prevalence of gender-based violence and Lockdown restriction among couples.

As shown in the above results above, there was a dramatic spike in number of women who were vulnerable and experienced gender-based violence cases recorded in Lagos State during the Lockdown period. These findings are supported by a report by Federal and State Ministries of Women Affairs, Nigeria and These United Nations Brief published in May, 2020.

According to Federal and State Ministries of Women Affairs in Nigeria, the highest number of GBV cases were reported in Nigeria were found in Lagos, totalling 222 for the period of March and April, 2020.

The United Nations Brief also reported that gender-based violence significantly increased since the lockdown began in the three most affected areas (Lagos State, FCT and Ogun State) on 30th March 2020. Also, The Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSVRT) reported a three-fold increase in the number of telephone calls received through their hotlines in one month. In particular, service providers have reported sharp increases in cases of intimate partner violence and domestic violence.

According to United Nations gender-based violence Brief, the lockdown restriction resulted in limited access to gender-based violence referral and rescue services thus survivors of gender-based violence also faced immense challenges in accessing affordable quality services, largely due to the limited availability of gender-based violence referral services. This corroborates our finding that women were at increased vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence during the Lockdown period.

Also, the responses received showed that gender-based violence is one of the negative social impact of lockdown. During epidemics women are more susceptible to violence and violence perpetrated against women tends to increase during such period.

The impact of COVID-19 on women, girls and children has far reaching effects. The aftermath of the pandemic include: economic uncertainty, increased substance abuse, loss of means of livelihood by families and disruption in educational calendar as well as learning activities for most children. These factors have also increased tensions within households, compounding violent situations and also the decreased access to support networks and critical support services both of which would otherwise serve to mitigate the magnitude and effects of the violence.

## **Limitations of Research Study**

The following issues were observed during the research.

- Conducting a virtual survey is quite tasking as it requires the application of excellent communication and negotiation skills to collect and document the required data. Some of the respondents were reluctant to respond to the survey and complained about their current plight of hunger and lack of resources during the lockdown period.
- Most of the respondents called were disappointed at the current insecurity in the country and which they were experiencing during the lockdown.
- We could not reach a large number of respondents due to the Lockdown restriction.



## CONCLUSION

Women and children represent the most vulnerable groups during social restriction and pandemics due to reduced access to economic resources and prolonged stay with their abusers.

To achieve optimal implementation of the United Nation's Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women as well as safeguard children and young girls from sexual and gender-based violence, there is an urgent need for Civil Society Organization, State and Federal Legislature, Government authorities and agencies to stir up action towards increasing protection services, provision of medical and psychosocial support services and economic support to women and children especially during pandemics.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Provision of Remote Psychosocial Support Services:** It is crucial for Federal Government Authorities such as Federal Ministries of Women's Affairs, and State Government Authorities to provide increased support to Civil Society Organizations addressing SGBV issues and Women Rights Organizations to that will enhance access remote psychosocial support services should be provided to SGBV survivors through Whatsapp and phone calls.

**Provision of Economic Support:** It is important for Private stakeholders, Government stakeholders to increase the provision of relief materials to help vulnerable persons in order to lessen the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Establishment of Emergency Response Mechanisms:** The Federal and State Government should be provide hotlines, and shelter to assist vulnerable women and girls at risk of sexual and gender-based violence during social lockdown situations.

**Provision of Safe Spaces for SGBV Survivors:** Increased funding and provision should be made available to Civil Society responders to SGBV issues and Women's Rights Organization to provide temporary safe spaces for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence especially children and girls.

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## APPENDIX

### SURVEY QUESTIONS

QUESTION	PARAMETER
Q1. My sex is	Female
	Male

	Other
	Lagos
Q2. I live in	Another State in Nigeria
Q3. Staying at home for long hours with my husband/wife makes me more likely to commit domestic violence.	Yes
	No
Q4. Staying at home during this period increases my vulnerability to abuse/violence from my husband/wife.	Yes
	No
Q5. My husband/wife has beaten me up, slapped or hit me in the past one or two weeks due to a disagreement we had.	Yes
	No
Q6. My husband/wife forcefully had sexual intercourse with me even when I provided him/her with cogent reasons for refusal in the past one/two weeks.	Yes
	No
Q7. I have witnessed one or more neighbors quarreling with or beating their husband/wife due to a disagreement or lack of provision of basic needs for the family in the past one/two weeks.	Yes
	No
Q8. I have witnessed a young girl or boy kept under the care of a guardian being maltreated, molested or raped in the past one/two weeks.	Yes
	No
Q9. Which of the following would you find easier to report to if you experience or witness incidents of gender-based violence such as rape, domestic violence, sexual assault, battery, sexual harassment, neglect etc. Please rank the following on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being your most preferred	Police
	NGO (E.G WRAHP)
	Government Agency (DSVRT)
	Religious leader
	Community leader
Q10. Which of the following support services would you recommend to be provided to survivors of gender-based violence at this time? Please rank the services on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being your most preferred service.	Providing free temporary shelter for survivors
	Providing financial assistance to help survivors establish their own businesses
	Providing survivors with free skills acquisition programmes
	Providing free legal services to enable survivors access justice
	Providing free medical and psycho-social support to survivors (including counselling)