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ARTICLE FIVE

DYNAMICS AND IMPLICATIONS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN RAZINAT MOHAMMED'S *A LOVE LIKE A WOMAN'S AND OTHER STORIES*

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Abstract

Gender-based violence is one of the most oppressive forms of gender inequality, posing a fundamental barrier to the equal participation of women and men in social, economic, and political spheres. Gender-based violence (GBV) has increasingly gained global attention over the past years. Focused studies continue to be conducted in African countries to understand the nature, prevalence, causes and consequences of GBV in all spheres of life. Cultural taboos and restrictions in some societies have subjected women to exploitation, oppression and subjugation. Although gender-based violence against women is widely discouraged, unequal power relations between sexes still linger. Thus, the study explores the dynamics and implications of gender-based violence in Razinat Mohammed's *A Love Like a Woman's and Other Stories* (2006), depicting its various facets and consequences. The theoretical framework is situated on the African feminist theory and Psychoanalytic theory, which aids in understanding the intentions of the authors in the texts, and mirroring how society, traditions, and religious doctrines contribute to gender-based violence. The study explores the different forms of violence, including physical, psychological, sexual, and socio-economic abuse that disproportionately affect marginalised populations. Qualitative textual analysis is the methodology employed for the study, using the primary texts selected and other secondary texts that are relevant. The study finds that gender-based violence is deeply rooted in unequal power dynamics between genders and can be manifested in various forms, highlighting the detrimental effects on survivors' physical and mental well-being, education, and social integration. The study concludes by advocating for further research, policy initiatives, and collective action to combat gender-based violence. The study also recommends the involvement of government, civil society organisations, and individuals in creating safe and inclusive societies where everyone has equal rights, dignity, and freedom from violence.

Introduction

Literature is concerned with all human activities. It is a field of study that is essentially oral and written in expression. According to Olu Obafemi, "Literature reflects and represents the world's reality across space and time. This implies that literature is not just a work of imagination aimed solely to give pleasure and entertainment but contributes more to the creation and appreciation of the human condition" (7). Literature teaches society through analysis and evaluation of fictitious and non-fictitious stories interpreted for social benefits, which in turn help reshape human behaviour and cause it to adapt to life's challenges.

According to Arango et al, The United Nations defines Gender-Based Violence (GBV) as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life." GBV is classified in various ways; it can be defined depending on the relationship between the perpetrator and victim (intimate partner violence and non-intimate partner violence), female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation and abuse, child abuse, and child marriage or any other form of physical or emotional violence (20).

Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most oppressive forms of gender inequality, posing a fundamental barrier to the equal participation of women and men in social, economic, and political spheres. GBV has increasingly gained global attention over the years. Focused studies continue to be conducted in African countries to understand the nature, prevalence, causes, and consequences of GBV in all spheres of life. Advocacy efforts by gender activists and feminists have also increased over time, primarily unpacking patriarchy and its antagonistic impact on gender equality. This is often seen through negative cultural and religious practices that encourage oppressive unequal treatment of women and girls compared to men and boys. Examples include the early and usually arranged marriages for the girl child. Gender advocacy has also been directed at exposing inadequacies, for instance; in the judicial system that often results in impunity or sentences for perpetrators that do not reflect the gravity of committed GBV offences.

In some African societies, women who challenge notions of male superiority, risk being detested by the

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communities since male supremacy is respected unquestionably by the majority of women. An African woman is expected to be dependent on male leadership and the excuse for this is that it is 'our culture'. The African culture and tradition deny women their fundamental human rights and a closer analysis of African culture reveals its selectivity and discriminatory nature. Culture and traditions are employed as excuses in explaining away the gross violations of human rights that women undergo. Exposure to intimate partner violence is linked with a multitude of adverse physical health outcomes, including acute injuries, chronic pain, gynaecological problems, depression, and substance abuse (Taft and Watson). Klugman observes that the economic costs of GBV include expenditures on service provision, foregone income for women and their families, decreased productivity, and negative impacts on human capital formation, which are burdensome to developing economies (3).

African writers such as Zaynab Alkali, Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Akachi Ezeigbo, Nawal El Saadawi, and Tsitsi Dangarembga have condemned the oppressive treatment of women in their works, ''their acid attacks on patriarchy as being nothing other than slavish and tormenting for women has also earned them the tag of 'radical feminists' (Aidoo 15). Gender-based violence can be seen in most patriarchal societies due to religion and traditional cultural norms which accord men a higher status than women. This affects the lives of women to the point of inhibiting their aspirations for social mobility.

The central focus of Razinat Mohammed's collection of short stories is the travail of women, punctuated by gender constraints and matrimonial woes that culminate in oppression. She suggests through her fictive works that women must cease to be dependent creatures who without question of doubt accept the command of their patriarchal society as they must take an active part in creating and determining their own lives and future. Mohammed's work under study exposes the serious and obvious cases of women's discrimination and ill-treatment, male domination, and sexual harassment amongst other forms of abuse that should seriously be confronted. This study seeks to evaluate the dynamics and implications of GBV, to improve GBV prevention and mitigation interventions.

Theoretical Framework

This study is approached from the African Feminist Perspective and the Psychoanalytic Theories. Women's literature is of significance to feminist theory because it focuses mainly on issues from women's perspectives and experiences such as gender, relationships, education, politics, marriages and employment. The diversification of women's experiences and the identity of womanhood have become very useful in feminist's theory. Most Third World women are calling for differences in imperative discussion in their gender awareness.

African women have proposed the term African Feminism as best explaining their situation of women empowerment. Filomena Steady defines African Feminism as 'emphasising female autonomy and cooperation; nature over culture; the centrality of children, multiple mothering and kinship' (3). Steady's understanding of African feminism, and to a large extent, the understanding of many other African (female) theorists, is the idea of African feminism as an all-inclusive concept for men, women, and children. African feminist theory examines the experiences and issues faced by women in African societies. It focuses on challenging and unique cultural perspectives, and explores the intersectionality of gender, race, class and other social factors that shape the lives of African women. African feminist theory recognises the diversity within Africa and the need for inclusive and culturally sensitive approaches to feminist theory and activism. Through examining the unique struggles and triumphs of African women, this theory aims to empower and uplift them, while advocating for gender equality and social justice in the African context.

The psychoanalytic theory was originally developed by Sigmund Freud and his followers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This theory posits that unconscious mental processes and childhood experiences shape an individual's behaviour, thoughts, and emotions throughout their life. According to this theory, unconscious thoughts, feelings, and desires influence our behaviour, even when we are not aware of them. Sibi explains how psychoanalysis came about. Sigmund Freud developed his psychoanalysis method from his mentor and friend, Jesef Breur. Breur had a patient named Anna. She spent most of her time alone with her ailing father by nursing him at the age of twenty-one. A horrible cough developed though there was no proof of any physical basis for the cause of this cough. Later, she developed some speech difficulties and became speechless immediately. After some period, she started to speak but only in English language and not her usual German. After their father's death, she refused to take in water all her life and developed problems such as loss of sensation in her feet and hand, paralysis, and involuntary problems spasms in her body. She had undergone visual hallucinations and tunnel visions. With these

developments, medical experts attended to the case of Anna but found no physical causes for her problems (Sibi 75).

Methodology

Qualitative textual analysis was conducted using the text selected and other secondary texts were consulted alongside the primary text which includes relevant literature sourced from the library, the internet, and journals. To justify this method, an in-depth study of the text was carried out considering the problem the research seeks to investigate. The choice of text was predicated on the fact that it focuses substantially on the dynamics and implications of gender-based violence in Nigerian society.

Review of related literature

Violence refers to the use of physical force or power to harm, damage, or injure someone and it can also include the threat of such action. Violence can take many forms including but not limited to physical violence, psychological violence, emotional violence, sexual violence, and financial violence. Acts of violence can be perpetrated by individuals or groups and can occur in many different contexts, such as in personal relationships, communities, or in the context of a war or conflict. Violence can have serious and long-lasting consequences, both for those who experience it directly and for the wider society in which it occurs. Violence against women generally derives from cultural and social norms that imbue men with power and authority over women (Population Report & Goldberg). Gender is related to but is not the same as sex although the two terms are often used interchangeably. Sex refers to the biological characteristics that make people male and female while gender refers to the socially attributed differences that make them masculine and feminine respectively.

Gender-based violence is a phenomenon deeply rooted in gender inequality and continues to be one of the most notable human rights' violations within societies. According to Iyabo Olojede, Gender-based violence refers to any socially injurious action, the threat of any kind or omission against a person based on their gender. Once the basis for any form of a violent act is the victim's gender, it is GBV irrespective of the victim's and perpetrators' genders. Therefore, both males and females can be victims of GBV (72). Charles Bresster believes that there is complexity with identifying perpetrators of GBV as unequivocally 'male' although it may be true that the perpetrator's gender does differ critically from that of the victim with overwhelming regularity. Identifying perpetrators solely by their gender is an inadequate way of explaining the myriad forms of GBV, and also cannot explain the fact that women are differently vulnerable to GBV, while men are solely the perpetrators (41).

Violence Against Women (VAW) is a more specific term, referring to any form of GBV that is primarily or exclusively committed against any member of the female sex. In this light, violence against girls, being younger members of the female sex can also be regarded as VAW. This is because feminity is ascribed to a female right from childhood. The basis for VAW is not the concept of "gender" but one of its variables "feminine".

Domestic Violence (DV) is limited in geographical scope as it refers to any act of violence that occurs only within a family, be it a family of two or an extended family setting. The basis for DV is therefore the social context of its occurrences rather than the characteristics of the victim. It, therefore, implies that either male or female can be a victim of DV. It usually occurs because the victim occupies some vulnerable position within a family. While it is not always gender-based, more often females are on the receiving end because they are generally perceived as 'weak' and thus vulnerable.

According to the UNGA Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, GBV takes place in various forms and includes:

1. Sexual Violence: this includes actual, attempted, or threatened (vaginal, anal, or oral) rape, including marital rape, sexual abuse and exploitation, forced prostitution, transaction/survival sex, sexual harassment, intimidation, and humiliation.
2. Physical Violence: it includes actual, attempted, or threatened physical assault or battery, slavery and slave-like practices, and trafficking.
3. Emotional and Psychological Violence: includes abuse and humiliation, such as insults, cruel and degrading treatment, compelling a person to engage in humble acts, and placing restrictions on liberty and freedom of movement.
4. Harmful Traditional Practices: this includes female genital mutilation/cutting, child marriage, honour or dowry killings or maiming, infanticide, sex-selective abortion practices, sex-selective neglect and abuse, and denial of education and economic opportunities for women and girls.
5. Socio-economic Violence: includes discrimination and denial of opportunities or services based on sex, gender, or sexual orientation, social exclusion, obstructive legal practices, such as denial of the exercise and enjoyment of civil, social, economic, cultural, and political rights, mainly to women and girls.

It is through this concept that there is an understanding of how women's subordination to men is socially constructed, by reinforcing male power and the beliefs of women's inferiority. Attempts have been made by African feminist scholars to define and develop their concept of feminism which can fit in with the sociocultural, political, and economic realities of Africa. Wale Okediran in his review of Razinat Mohammed's *A Love Like A Woman and Other Stories,* says out of the eleven stories in the collection, women were the chief protagonists in nine of the stories. Thus we have Afi in 'Something to Live For', Kulu in "Sterile Water", Dije in "A Love Like a Woman's", Laila in "Laila", Mary Rose in "The U-Turn", Erika in "Erika", Nina in "Beasts on Rampage", Hajo in "Acquaintances", and Furera in "Official Touts". While Kulu and Dije suffer at the hands of their husbands, Laila, Mary Rose, Furera and Erika have no choice but to swallow all the indignities thrown at them by their unappreciative husbands or partners (21).

The society has upheld women's subordination to men in all spheres of life. Hart Hartman added by saying, consequently, all the power and authority within the family, the society, and the state remain entirely in the hands of men. Society tends to underestimate women and considers men as physically and intellectually more capable than women. Hence, women are discriminated against in the forum, marketplace, and politics. The crucial elements of patriarchy as we currently experience them are heterosexual marriage, female child rearing and housework, and women's economic dependence on men reinforced by arrangements in the labour market (19). This is seen in Firdaus' father in *Woman at Point Zero* (1975) by Nawal EL Sadaawi. Her father's behaviour is influenced by societal dictates and personality traits. Both forces are very strong, he has no sympathy for his wife or even his children. "He beats his wife and makes her bite the dust each night" (10) and believes it is normal even when she mourns the death of her children. "When one of his female children died, my father would eat his supper… and then he would go to sleep, just as he did every night. When the child that dies was a boy, he would beat my mother, then have his supper and lie down to sleep" (17).

This is similar to Razinat Mohammed's *The Travails of a First Wif*e (2015), where Mohammed paints a dismal portrait of a woman who is at the mercy of her husband, Ibrahim. She must never contend with or question her husband in any way for so doing may provoke a divorce. He could not understand how Zarah could fail to correlate his physical and mental superiority over her. "Silence was an aberration of his mental health and he felt belittled. How could she, Zarah, a woman he had married out of sheer pity defy him without remorse? He thought of writing out a divorce letter for her right then…" (59). Zarah sees Ibrahim as a mini-god and this further contributes to her living a life of servitude and pain.

In Chika Unigwe's *The Black Sisters' Street* (2011) the characters are voiceless and marginalised members of society; the novel also, emphasises the situation most Nigerian women face. After Sisi's death, Efe reveals how Oga Titus a married wealthy merchant, impregnates her as a teenager and refuses to take responsibility for his actions but she believes that if she delivers a baby boy for Oga Titus, he will have no choice but to accept his son because of his gender. She states 'I hope it's a boy. If it's a boy his father will want him' (65). A higher rate of illiteracy exists among parents who are ignorant of either cultural norms or family beliefs, both of which generally prioritise males over females and hence prefer educating the son rather than the daughter. In some societies, preference for sons is a powerful tradition; the reason for this priority placed over male offspring is due to an unbroken chain of inheritance.

In Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), Ibuza's culture values male children more than female ones. A woman who is not able to bear her husband sons to take up the family name is seen to be a failure and her position in her husband's house is threatened. This is confirmed by Emecheta, "when Adaku has her baby weeks later, Nnaife was happier because the new wife gave him a son" (27). Nnaife recognises the importance of a male child in his family which is why he is very happy that the new wife gives birth to a son.

Violence against women and the girl child halts economic activity. An increase in violence against women by one percentage point can reduce economic activities by up to 8.7 percent on the average. Humm Maggi says that violence against women is more detrimental to economic development in countries without protective laws against domestic violence, the economic cost of violence against women is higher in countries where the gender gap in education between partners is high (20). Societies that discriminate by gender tend to experience less rapid socio-economic growth and poverty reduction than societies that treat males and females more equally. Similarly, social gender disparities produce economically inefficient outcomes (World Bank). The economic costs of GBV include expenditures on service provision, decreased productivity, and negative impacts on human capital formation.

Dynamics of Gender-Based Violence in the Text

Razinat Mohammed in her text, A Love Like a Woman's and Other Stories, examines the multifarious fictional realities in the lives of different women, deftly navigating the planes of marriage, religion, culture and the vicissitudes that affect other lives. Child marriage is part of the practice of child betrothal, often including civil cohabitation; it is considered to be a form of forced marriage, given that one and/or both parties have not expressed full, free and informed consent. Causes of child marriages include poverty, bride price, dowries, cultural traditions, religious and social practices, illiteracy, and the perceived inability of women to work for money.

According to Girls Not Bride, Nigeria ranks 13th among the 20 countries with the highest rate of girl-child marriages with approximately 3 million child marriages, 17% married before they turn 15 and 43% married before they reach the age of 18. In Nigeria, the rate of child marriage is 3 times higher in the Northern region of the country with a whopping 76% and 10% in the South East region (21). Girl child marriage has severe consequences on the well-being of the girls involved. They are often forced to leave school and are deprived of education, limiting their future opportunities and potential. These girls are also more vulnerable to experiencing domestic violence and child birth complications. In the first story, "Something to Live For" we see the practice of girl-child marriage. Out of the emotional and psychological trauma of being forced into marrying an elderly man she barely knows, Afi tries to commit suicide to experience a new life, different from the one she knows, life to her is a misery (13). She is angry at the stranger for saving her life. When Efida asks her why she wants to kill herself, she begins to weep:

> My father first, by making me marry a man I hardly knew, and now my husband will not divorce me even after giving birth to a child for him. He claims to have given my father a lot of money on my head which only a son from me could repay. She was now crying softly (12).

This illustrates gender discrimination, Afi's husband, Uduma, sees a female child as inferior to a male child, and only a male child is worth a huge amount of money. The only way Afi could gain her freedom is by compensating him with a male child. This treatment and socialisation of girls undermine their self-esteem and their ability to reach their full potential. Sons are considered 'assets' and daughters are viewed as 'liabilities'. The sons usually get preferential treatment because of multiple, socio-economic, religious and cultural factors, whereas girls are treated as less desirable due to economic burdens, liabilities and many socio-cultural factors. Much of the discrimination against the girl-child has to do with cultural beliefs, social norms, customs, superstitions and mindsets that combine to produce discriminating behaviour patterns and abuse. Afi realises that her daughter stands a better chance with her alive than dead. At least she could ensure that the girl did not experience the kind of fate that human contrivance had prescribed to her. She unlike her docile and morbid mother, (who did little or nothing to protect her from being a child bride) would protect her daughter to the end (14).

Afi endures an unhappy emotional life with her husband Uduma, whom she gives too much trouble but he would not let her go. A long time ago she was not capable of loving any man, she locked her heart to every touch or feeling except those which maternal instinct compelled upon her. But experiences a new love and tenderness with Efida which gives her strength to live and return to her daughter:

> She had always known that not being in love with Uduma and having to live with him was painful but didn't realise that loving an unavailable man was even more painful. But the decision, which she had taken, difficult as it may seem, was the best in the circumstances because she did not want his feelings to be hurt by the unfortunate fate of governing her life. (19)

In "Sterile Water", Kulu's life depicts one whose existence is enmeshed in destructive poverty. In a family of five children, a jobless husband and offensive cultural practices are unfavourable to the plight of the mother who toils but gets incommensurate returns. She struggles to fry 'kosai' to feed her children, with her helpless husband, Samaila, who loses his job as a messenger and also relies on her to feed him. Kulu's first child Jummai, who cares for her younger ones in her mother's absence, is more mature than a fourteen-year-old, even though she is just ten:

> Don't cry, mama! She said, her voice quaking and betraying the arrival of her tears. She wiped her face with the back of her hands and tried to comfort her mother. The other four children, all of them boys, were busy arguing about the sizes of their kosai balls. (24)

This illustrates the gender roles society places on a girl child. Girls may experience restrictions on their freedom, with societal expectations dictating how they should prioritise motherhood and responsibilities. Kulu feels a certain type of nudging that she wants to pass on to the other side if only to escape from the hard life, but she thinks about her children. 'Samaila would not waste a moment to marry another woman who would come to ill-treat her children and the dread of it made her want to live on' (25). Samaila on the other hand only worries if he can afford his occasional treat of 'burukutu', a locally brewed beer. It seems to give him a special bother because the experience was not just for the beer in itself, he was not the heavy-drinking type but he goes there for the company of men albeit bad ones and the self-esteem he gets from this kind of men. Samila sees himself as an accomplished man because he has fulfilled the requirement of housing a wife and filling her up at regular intervals with children (26).

Cultural beliefs can create a lack of awareness and misinformation regarding women's rights. This can lead to a perpetuation of harmful behaviours and a reluctance to challenge and address gender-based violence due to social, cultural or religious norms. Samaila believes it is the responsibility of the mother to place something on her child's plate, and not the father's job.

> 'I don't know how long it will take you to understand our culture. This is not the responsibility of a man here. A man gives his wife or wives children; the rest is her palaver. I know why you are swollen-headed. It's because I have spoilt you by always giving you half of my salary when I still worked. Sorry, my dear wife, the luxury has come to an abrupt end… just the way my appointment was terminated. Do you understand me? He did not bother himself with the fact that she was weeping. (31)

Samaila says his cousin Bappa always warns him about not being able to sustain giving Kulu part of his salary by copying a culture that is alien and dangerous. In the 'Bura' culture, women are unduly exploited and, indeed cheated within the culture. A mother's role is to toil and provide for her children so that the father can reap the joy because children always belong to their fathers. Samaila kicks against family planning and considers it an 'unforgivable sin'; he claims God created a woman with many eggs which need to be brought forth before they accumulate and cause internal problems, and family planning is one of the major causes of breast cancer or cancer of the uterus.

Kulu gives two reasons why she needs to take a break from childbearing; the need for a woman to rest and rebuild her body, and also because she is the only one left with the burden of fending for the family. Kulu's society is adverse to girl-child education hence she is not likely to meet a female health worker around her neighbourhood to assist, so she has to go to Vendi's Patent Medicine Store to get family planning drugs. Vendi has three wives and seventeen children and believes God is the provider, not man, he gives something to every mouth that he creates (38).

Vendi lies to Kulu and gives her a dose of sterile water instead of family-planning drugs. 'Vendi is a beast and animal… uh! She vomited again. Just like all men. Selfish and thoughtless. So he cheated me out of my three hundred naira' (41). Vendi pretends to help Kulu and returns the money she pays for the family to her husband, Kulu. Vendi chooses to be loyal to tradition and turns a blind eye to her situation, even after pleading. Samaila is insensitive and nonchalant about his wife's health even though he is responsible for her condition. 'Samaila sat on the cold verandah not bothering himself with what was going on. After all, he had seen Kulu retch in that manner on five past occasions. He chewed at his kola nut and watched Jummai glide past him with a little bowl of water for her mother' (41).

The psychological form of GBV is characterised by the emotional, verbal, and mental abuse inflicted upon victims, leaving lasting psychological and emotional scars. In A Love Like a Woman's and Other Stories Mohammed portrays a form of psychological and emotional abuse through the character Deji. The story describes the height of one's love characterised by 'ultimate sacrifice', and in this wise it is a woman giving her life, having first lost the life of the unborn to the violence of a mentally unstable man. Deji bears the burden of love by giving her life to a man whose mental state defies immediate and remote remedy:

> Let go of me, she cried in pain but all he did was to weigh himself down on her, and crash! They fell onto the ground. Dije felt a sharp pain in her lower abdomen as her back touched the floor. She struggled frantically to get off Abbas' hold on her neck, but he would not release his hold and his eyes continued to gleam and squint in the way that psychotics often look while his mouth kept muttering. (46)

Abbas in his childhood had launched some inexplicable violent attack on his playmates, instead of seeking medical attention, Falmata resorts to prayers. Hassan

drags Dije from the position sees blood from underneath her wrapper and shouts repeatedly. Maman Abbas and Hajara rush into the room, on seeing the two women, Dije breaks into a new spate of tears and raises both of her hands, which the women embrace. 'The three of them formed a circle of crying women. Each cries for herself and the sorrows of living as a mere tool in the hands of another (47). Dije suffers enough physical agony not to mention the loss of her baby, but she is still concerned about her husband's health. This leads to her untimely death, despite all the warnings and precautions from Baba Hassan and the family to avoid visiting Abbas.

In the story "Laila", Razinat gives a new perspective to the concerns of a divorcee. Laila is a first-year student of Home Economics at the Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri, but Salisu, her first husband who is a trader in textile materials did not approve of her continuing with her studies. 'Salisu did not approve of married women going to school instead of keeping their homes and being there whenever they were needed by their husbands who could pop in at any time of the day like Salisu often did' (60). Laila is physically molested by Salisu after she gets back from school late due to her exams being delayed (61).

Laila's second marriage to Ahmed Jalingo is also full of psychological violence. Even the guardsman under the employment of her husband (Mohammed) shows her no respect, he claims he is a man with a wife like her at home, not her errand boy. Laila is determined to make her second marriage work but the string holding it is threatening to break as her husband does not regard her in any way. This cycle can be challenging to break, as victims may feel trapped, dependent, or fearful of the consequences if they try to leave the abusive situation. Most times, women stay in abusive marriages for the sake of their children. '… The tears flowed ceaselessly and at that time something did a cartwheel in her abdomen. The tiny scratching stilled her body completely like a palpitating heart would pin its host to a spot. When she felt the spot with her hand, she knew that she had to keep this home together for the sake of her dignity and the unborn. She wiped her face and began to ponder her fate as a woman!' (65).

Razinat Mohammed's short story "The U-Turn" explores another dynamic of emotional gender-based violence. Sam rejects Mary Rose because of her weight; he expects to see a slim damsel. 'What? Sammy! I am Rosie; can't you recognise me? I am sorry; I think you must be mistaken. Such things happen you know, said Samson, wondering how on earth he got himself into such a mess. Is it possible that this could be Mary Rose? He wondered in a flash but quickly dismissed the thought from his head. Is it possible that such a beautiful name could belong to such a grotesque figure? He wondered again (69).

The discrimination against the girl-child has to do with cultural beliefs, patriarchal social norms, traditional practices, customs, superstitions and mindsets that combine to produce discriminating behaviour patterns and abuse. In the short story "Erika", Bassey Johnson tries to manipulate Erika not to go back to Jamaica by saying 'Monica is not a boy, therefore, she needs legality'. This is to say that only a boy is considered a legitimate child outside wedlock (75). The dynamics of gender-based violence are crucial for developing effective prevention strategies and providing support to survivors. It requires challenging societal norms, empowering marginalised groups, promoting education and awareness, and holding perpetrators accountable for their actions.

Implications of Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence is a widespread and deeply concerning issue that affects individuals all over the world. The implications of gender-based violence are far-reaching and encompass various aspects of society, including physical and emotional well-being, and social and gender equality. The impact on the victims of gender-based violence is heart-breaking. The victims often endure physical injuries, psychological trauma, and lasting emotional scars. Fear, anxiety, and low self-esteem are common consequences, which can lead to depression and isolation. Gender-based violence not only violates a person's human rights, but it also restricts their ability to live a fulfilling and dignified life.

The implications of Gender-based violence extend beyond individual victims. Gender-based violence weakens social cohesion and creates a climate of fear within communities. Relationships, families, and entire societies suffer as trust is eroded, and divisions deepen. It becomes difficult for survivors to seek help or support due to fear of stigma or further violence. Additionally, gender-based violence has significant economic implications. When individuals are subjected to violence, their ability to participate fully in social, economic and political life is compromised. This not only hinders personal development but also limits the potential for economic growth and societal advancement.

Moreover, the costs associated with healthcare, judicial proceedings, and support services burden societies as a whole. Growing up in a domestically violent home can have long-lasting implications for children. They may be at a higher risk of experiencing or perpetrating violence in the future. The ongoing exposure

to violence can hinder their overall development, including cognitive, emotional, and social development, impacting their ability to thrive later in life. In one of Razinat Mohammed's short story titles "One Good Turn", we see Amadi's father being a bad influence on him. Amadi is just sixteen years old but he freely smokes in his father's presence because his father also smokes in his presence. 'After all, my father smokes in my presence: if he does not respect himself, why should I respect him?' (102). Peter's father maltreats his mother, a good and decent woman in the hands of a monstrous husband. We also see the effect of an overbearing father on a child, 'I was always a sad one who could weep easily. I believed that it was not in my nature to do that; rather, it was my father's fault for being too high-handed with me' (105). This illustrates the effect of gender-based violence on children who witness it in their homes; they are likely to engage in risky behaviour and perpetuate violence in their adult lives.

Peter joins the D.D Five, later known, as D.D. standing for Dare Death Gang without realising the consequences of his future life. Peter is warned early about withdrawal of membership which amounts to voluntary suicide and he accepts all the conditions and he worked with D.D. for 27 years. Amadi had been killed in a shoot-out with law enforcement agents along the Damaturu-Maiduguri road. Razinat Mohammed portrayed women as victims of armed robbery and insecurity in Nigeria. 'When I enquired from the onlooker, I was told that the wife of the bank manager had died but the child had been saved' (110).

Razinat Mohammed portrayed a different type of psychological abuse in her short story "Something to Live For". Afi's father forces her to marry an elderly man in return for his unpaid debt and her husband refuses to divorce her even after giving birth to a child for him, claiming to have given her father a lot of money that only a male child could repay (12). This event pushes her into attempting to commit suicide to free herself from the pain and emotional abuse.

Gender-based violence is under-reported and there is often impunity for perpetrators. Common myths, such as that what happens at home should stay at home or that it is nobody's business what happens in the family are very powerful. This makes denouncing violence in the family difficult, and it may affect the provision of help and support services, thereby exposing the abused person to greater harm, with possibly fatal consequences. Furthermore, violence very often silences those who are affected by it. By failing to speak out against domestic violence we also mirror the techniques used by perpetrators.

In some countries, most types and forms of gender-based violence are illegal and punishable by law, but there are countries which lag in this respect. In one of Razinat Mohammed's short stories, "A Love Like a Woman's" bearing the same title as the book, Abbas from his childhood had some inexplicable violent attacks on his playmates but instead of his family to seek for medical attention at an early stage, they decided to hide it from the public eye to protect the name of the family. After Abbas violently attacks Dije, Baba is more concerned with protecting his family name, while Dije struggles for her life in the hospital. 'Baba called a general meeting of everyone, young and old. The meeting was purely pragmatic. He was concerned about the future of his family and as such, he had to warn every one of the need to keep what happened within the household. A collective agreement was reached that no one was to mention the incident, especially as Dije was to be discharged the next day (53). The little children who go out to play are threatened by the phantom mairamkuru, a legendary figure, whose giant height is believed to tower in the sky, and no one has ever seen her head. The older family members use it to instil fear in the children to keep their mouths shut about the happenings in the house:

> She was often mentioned as a deterrent to erring children or those who planned to err. Her eyes were believed to be watching every child and listening to what they say even in their dreams and would in turn report to their parents. When they heard these, the children began to fidget on the mat and move nearer to the older ones. Baba talked about the effect of this old tradition on the Kanuri people and smiled inwardly with satisfaction that the matter was sure to remain a family affair (54).

Baba and Falmata also did not inform Dije's family about her condition, all in a bid to protect their family's image. 'Dije then began thinking about her mother and her brothers and sisters in her father's house. She had not seen them since her hospitalisation. She wondered if they had any idea of what she was going through. After assessing the situation, she was convinced that Baba would not want her people to hear of a thing like that, so she waved them out of her mind' (56).

The lack of education among boys from childhood, that violence against women is an offence and a violation of human rights is one of the implications of gender-based violence. Boys can take up the responsibility of standing up for gender equality and breaking down the attitude that causes violence against girls and women.

The need to be educated from a young age is pertinent to their lives. Youth can also be mobilised to fight against harmful practices such as child marriage. In Razinat Mohammed's short story "Something to Live For" Efida takes the responsibility of taking care of Afi after she attempts suicide because her father forces her into marrying a man she hardly knows so he can settle his debts. Efida wonders why men should force helpless girls into marrying husbands who abuse them physically and emotionally. "Suddenly, he found himself thinking about why men, of whatever quasi-organic ties to women, should force helpless girls into marrying husbands that they felt no emotional attachment to (17). Edifa motivates Afi to stand up for her right and protect her daughter to the end, unlike her docile mother who did nothing or little to protect her when her father decided to sell her out like a commodity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, gender-based violence has significant and profound dynamics and effects. The rights and well-being of people, particularly women and girls, are seriously threatened by this type of violence, which has its roots in disparities in power relationships and societal standards. The high incidence of gender-based violence emphasises the essential need for ongoing education, assistance, and prevention. Early exposure to violence can impede brain development and make children more vulnerable to various mental health issues that may persist into adulthood, according to neurological and behavioural research. It is impossible to overstate the effect on victims' physical and emotional health, as well as the effects on the economy. In addition, gender-based violence creates obstacles to gender equality and feeds a cycle of injustice.

Addressing rooted societal norms and beliefs, fostering education and awareness, bolstering legal frameworks, and offering victims full support services are all essential in the fight against gender-based violence. Governments, civil organisations, communities, and individuals must work together to make significant changes.

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