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Transitional Justice Mechanisms as Enabler in Combating Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria

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Abstract
This paper examined the role of transitional justice mechanisms in combating gender-based violence (GBV) in Nigeria, particularly in the context of prolonged conflict and systemic inequalities. The objective is to explore how transitional justice through truth commissions, judicial prosecutions, and institutional reforms can address the root causes of GBV, promote accountability, and facilitate reconciliation. The methodology involves a qualitative approach, analyzing case studies, legal frameworks, and reports to understand the effectiveness of these mechanisms. The theoretical framework is grounded in transitional justice theory, which emphasizes addressing past human rights violations and fostering societal healing through accountability, reparations, and reforms. Findings reveal that transitional justice mechanisms can identify the systemic socio-cultural patterns contributing to GBV, thereby guiding targeted interventions and policy reforms. Truth-telling and documentation processes provide vital insights into the scope of GBV, while reparations such as financial compensation, healthcare, and educational opportunities help restore the dignity of survivors. Moreover, legal and institutional reforms driven by transitional justice can address discriminatory laws, ensure gender-sensitive policies, and strengthen judicial systems to tackle GBV more effectively. Ultimately, transitional justice mechanisms play a crucial role in dismantling impunity, ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable and survivors receive necessary support, contributing to a more just and equitable society in Nigeria. The paper advocates for the integration of transitional justice in national strategies to combat GBV, underscoring its transformative potential for achieving gender justice.
Keywords: Transitional Justice, Sexual Violence, Domestic Violence, Gender, Violence, Gender-Based Violence.

INTRODUCTION

According to World Health Organization (2013), Gender-based violence (GBV) is a pervasive and deeply entrenched issue in Nigeria, profoundly affecting the lives of women and girls across the country. This violence takes multiple forms, including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse, and is exacerbated by prolonged conflict, systemic inequalities, and entrenched

patriarchal norms. The consequences of GBV are far-reaching, contributing to physical and mental health problems, economic dis-empowerment, and social marginalization of survivors. Nigeria's Gender-Based Violence landscape is shaped by various factors, including cultural practices, socioeconomic conditions, and the legacy of conflict. Cultural norms that prioritize male authority and control over women, combined with limited economic opportunities and access to education for women, create an environment where GBV can thrive. The ongoing conflict in regions such as the Northeast, where Boko Haram and other insurgent groups operate, further exacerbates the problem, with women and girls often targeted for sexual violence, forced marriages, and other forms of abuse (Human Rights Watch, 2018). Addressing GBV in Nigeria requires comprehensive strategies that not only provide immediate relief to survivors but also tackle the root causes and systemic factors perpetuating the violence. Traditional justice mechanisms, such as the formal legal system, have proven insufficient in addressing these complex and deeply rooted issues. There is a growing recognition of the need for transitional justice mechanisms, which offer a holistic approach to addressing human rights abuses, promoting accountability, and fostering reconciliation (Clark, 2010).

Transitional justice encompasses a range of judicial and non-judicial measures, including truth commissions, judicial prosecutions, and institutional reforms, aimed at addressing the legacies of human rights abuses. By focusing on these mechanisms, this paper explores how they can provide a framework for addressing the deep-seated issues contributing to GBV, fostering a culture of accountability, and promoting reconciliation in Nigeria. Transitional justice mechanisms have been employed in various contexts worldwide to address the aftermath of conflicts and systemic human rights abuses. These mechanisms seek to uncover the truth about past abuses, provide justice for victims, and implement reforms to prevent future violations. In the context of GBV, transitional justice can play a crucial role in uncovering systemic patterns of abuse, addressing socio-cultural factors perpetuating violence, and informing targeted interventions and policy reforms (Sriram, C. L., & Pillay, S. 2009).

One of the key components of transitional justice is comprehensive truth-telling and documentation. Truth commissions, which investigate past human rights violations, provide a platform for survivors to share their experiences and for society to acknowledge the extent of the abuse. This process not only helps to uncover the systemic patterns and socio-cultural factors contributing to GBV but also offers crucial insights that inform targeted interventions and policy reforms aimed at addressing the root causes of the violence. The provision of reparations is another critical aspect of transitional justice mechanisms. Reparations can take various forms, including financial compensation, healthcare, and educational opportunities, and are essential for restoring dignity and supporting the rehabilitation of GBV survivors. By addressing the economic and social impacts of GBV, reparations contribute to the long-term recovery and empowerment of survivors (United Nations, 2014). Transitional justice processes also facilitate legal and institutional reforms necessary for combating GBV. These reforms include revising discriminatory laws, implementing gender-sensitive policies, and strengthening judicial and law enforcement systems to ensure the effective handling of GBV cases. By promoting accountability and dismantling the culture of impunity, transitional justice mechanisms help to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice and survivors receive adequate support.

However, transitional justice mechanisms serve as critical enablers in the fight against GBV in Nigeria. They not only support

survivors in their healing process but also contribute to creating a more just and equitable society. This paper argues for the integration of transitional justice into national strategies to combat GBV, highlighting its potential to transform the landscape of gender justice in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

To effectively understand the role of transitional justice mechanisms in combating gender-based violence (GBV) in Nigeria, it is important to clarify several key concepts integral to this discussion. These include transitional justice, gender-based violence, truth commissions, judicial prosecutions, institutional reforms, and reparations.

Transitional Justice

Transitional justice refers to a set of judicial and non-judicial measures implemented by societies to redress legacies of massive human rights abuses (Hayner, P. B. 2010). These measures include criminal prosecutions, truth commissions, reparations programs, and various kinds of institutional reforms. According to Skaar, E., García-Godos, J., & Collins, C. (2016), the key elements of transitional justice are: Truth Commissions, Judicial Prosecutions, Institutional Reforms and Reparations.

Transitional justice refers to the set of judicial and non-judicial measures implemented by societies to address the legacy of massive human rights abuses. These measures aim to ensure accountability, serve justice, and achieve reconciliation. Transitional justice is crucial in post-conflict societies or in contexts where systemic violations of human rights have occurred, providing a framework to address the past while promoting a more just and equitable future. Transitional justice mechanisms play a crucial role in addressing gender-based violence (GBV) by exposing the systemic and structural factors that perpetuate GBV, including cultural norms and institutional failures; holding perpetrators accountable for GBV and dismantling the culture of impunity; leading to significant policy and legal changes aimed at protecting women's rights and preventing GBV; offering compensation and support to survivors of GBV, helping them rebuild their lives and restoring their dignity (Rubio-Marín, 2009).

Transitional justice mechanisms are vital tools for addressing the legacies of human rights abuses and promoting a more just and equitable society. By uncovering the truth, holding perpetrators accountable, providing reparations, and implementing institutional reforms, these mechanisms contribute to healing and reconciliation in post-conflict societies. For Nigeria, integrating transitional justice into national strategies to combat GBV can transform the landscape of gender justice, ensuring that survivors receive the support they need and that future generations are protected from such violence.

Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence refers to harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power, and harmful norms. GBV includes a wide range of abuses, from physical, sexual, and psychological violence to economic and emotional abuse (Amnesty International, 2018). The consequences of gender-based violence are devastating. Survivors often experience life-long emotional distress, mental health problems and poor reproductive health. Abused women are also at higher risk of acquiring HIV. Women who have been physically or sexually assaulted tend to be intensive long-term users of health services. The impact of violence may also extend to future generations: children, who have witnessed abuse, were victims themselves or were born of the abuse suffered by their mothers (such as children born of war time rape, especially within patriarchal cultures that prohibit access to abortion), can suffer lasting

psychological damage. Indeed, there is evidence in research to indicate that the intergenerational transfer of trauma (whereby children who were born after the fact are negatively affected by trauma inherited from their families and communities) is profound within families and communities that have suffered loss or experienced conflict (UN, 1993). This again demonstrates the long-lasting impacts and consequences of violence.
Gender-based violence is perhaps the most widespread and socially tolerated of human rights violations. The cost to women, their children, families and communities is a significant obstacle to reducing poverty, achieving gender equality and ensuring a peaceful transition for post-conflict societies. This, in conjunction with the mental and physical health implications of gender-based violence, impacts on a state or region's ability to construct or reconstruct a stable and productive society in the wake of conflict. As a result, gender-based violence, its root causes and myriad consequences, become vitally important to tackle in any period of transition (UN, 1993).

Delaet, (2005) draws on the basic distinction between biological sex and gender when she explains the concept of gender-based violence thus: 'sex-specific violence can be defined as the particular types of violence experienced by women and men because of their biological sex. In contrast, gender-based violence refers to violence resulting from social constructions of masculinity and femininity. In short, sex-specific violence deals in essence with questions of who has been victimized by violence whereas the concept of gender-based violence is more useful for understanding how and why violence is manifested in particular ways (Delaet, 2005). The point is not to divide men and women into the dichotomous categories of 'perpetrator' and 'victim', but to recognize that both men and women can be victims and perpetrators of gender-based violence.

Women are targeted especially because of their biological sex and status in society during times of conflict. Forms of sexual violence perpetrated against women include: mass rape, forced pregnancy, forced prostitution, forced marriage, and sexual slavery. In addition, women face domestic violence, extreme economic vulnerability, and secondary victimization through institutions such as the criminal justice system, both during conflict and in the aftermath of conflict.

However, men can also be victims of gender-based violence during conflict, albeit in different and complex ways. The legitimacy of the killing of male soldiers can be called into question in contexts in which men face forced conscription, particularly when child soldiers constitute a large number of the fighters. In addition, many civilian men are killed because they are of fighting age and are therefore viewed as potential combatants and a threat. Men are also the victims of sexual violence, including rape and sexual torture, during war. In addition, men are victimized when they are forced to rape or to watch their loved ones being raped. (Daelet, 2005) notes that 'efforts to mobilize men to commit mass rape “reflect the common methods of training torturers – exposure to and engagement in increasingly unthinkable violence and humiliations.” Men subjected to this type of gender-based violence who become rapists are arguably both victims and perpetrators of violence (Delaet, 2005).

Literature Review

Transitional justice encompasses a set of judicial and non-judicial measures aimed at redressing legacies of human rights abuses, ensuring accountability, serving justice, and achieving reconciliation. These measures include criminal prosecutions, truth commissions, reparations programs, and various forms of institutional reforms. Transitional justice is essential in contexts where countries are transitioning from periods of conflict or authoritarian rule to peace and democracy,

seeking to address past abuses and prevent their recurrence (Teitel, 2000).

Overview of Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria

Gender-based violence (GBV) in Nigeria is a pervasive issue affecting women and girls across the country. GBV manifests in various forms, including domestic violence, sexual assault, female genital mutilation, and human trafficking. The Nigerian context is marked by significant challenges, including weak legal frameworks, cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequality, and inadequate support systems for survivors (Amnesty International, 2018). Studies have highlighted the widespread nature of GBV in Nigeria. According to a 2013 report by the World Health Organization, approximately 30% of Nigerian women aged 15-49 have experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner. The prevalence is even higher in conflict-affected regions, where armed groups exploit and abuse women and girls (WHO, 2013).

Intersection of Transitional Justice and GBV

Transitional justice mechanisms are particularly relevant in addressing GBV as they offer holistic approaches to uncovering the truth, ensuring justice for victims, and implementing reforms to prevent future violations. These mechanisms can reveal systemic patterns of GBV, address socio-cultural factors perpetuating violence, and inform targeted interventions and policy reforms (Bell & O'Rourke, 2007). Truth commissions, for instance, play a critical role in documenting GBV incidents, providing a platform for survivors to share their experiences, and making recommendations for reparations and reforms. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission is often cited as a model for incorporating gender perspectives in transitional justice processes (Goldblatt & Meintjes, 1998).

Truth commissions are crucial in transitional justice for their role in truth-telling and documentation. These commissions investigate past human rights violations and provide a platform for survivors to share their stories. This process not only uncovers systemic patterns of GBV but also informs interventions and policy reforms. For example, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada included specific focus on the experiences of Indigenous women and girls, shedding light on gendered dimensions of violence and abuse (TRC Canada, 2015). Reparations programs are another critical aspect of transitional justice mechanisms, essential for addressing the impacts of GBV. Reparations can include financial compensation, healthcare services, and educational opportunities for survivors. These measures are vital for restoring dignity and supporting the rehabilitation of GBV survivors. The United Nations' Guidance Note on Reparations for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence emphasizes the need for compre-hensive reparations programs that address the specific needs of GBV survivors, including access to medical and psychological care, education, and economic opportunities (United Nations, 2014). Legal and institutional reforms are necessary components of transitional justice aimed at preventing future occurrences of GBV. These reforms involve revising discriminatory laws, implementing gender-sensitive policies, and strengthening judicial and law enforcement systems. For instance, the reform of family laws in post-apartheid South Africa included significant changes to address gender discrimination and protect women's rights. These reforms were supported by transitional justice mechanisms that highlighted the need for legal and institutional changes to ensure justice for GBV survivors (Hassim, 2006).

Addressing the Root Causes of Gender-Based Violence

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a significant issue in Nigeria, deeply rooted in historical,

cultural, and socio-economic factors. Transitional justice mechanisms offer a comprehensive approach to addressing these root causes by uncovering systemic patterns, promoting accountability, and implementing reforms aimed at preventing future violations. This section explored how transitional justice can effectively tackle the root causes of GBV in Nigeria, drawing on detailed references to support the discussion.

Transitional justice mechanisms, particularly truth commissions, play a crucial role in uncovering the systemic patterns and socio-cultural factors that perpetuate GBV. These commissions provide a platform for survivors to share their experiences, thereby revealing the widespread and ingrained nature of GBV (Hayner, P. B. 2010). For instance, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of South Africa provided valuable insights into the systemic nature of GBV during apartheid, highlighting how institutionalized discrimination and violence were perpetuated by socio-cultural norms (Goldblatt & Meintjes, 1998). Accountability is a fundamental aspect of transitional justice that helps dismantle the culture of impunity surrounding GBV. Judicial prosecutions and other legal mechanisms ensure that perpetrators of GBV are held accountable for their actions, which serves as a deterrent against future violations (International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), 2009). In Nigeria, the lack of accountability for GBV is a significant barrier to justice. Transitional justice mechanisms can address this by strengthening judicial and law enforcement systems to ensure effective handling of GBV cases. The establishment of specialized courts or units within the police force to handle GBV cases can enhance accountability and provide a more supportive environment for survivors (Amnesty International, 2018).

Legal and institutional reforms are crucial for addressing the root causes of GBV and ensuring long-term prevention. Transitional justice processes can facilitate these reforms by identifying discriminatory laws and practices and advocating for their revision (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2010). Reforms might include revising laws that discriminate against women, implementing gender sensitive policies, and ensuring that law enforcement agencies are trained to handle GBV cases effectively. For example, in post-apartheid South Africa, legal reforms included changes to family laws and the establishment of specialized courts to address gender-specific issues, which significantly contributed to reducing the prevalence of GBV (Hassim, 2006). Reparations are a critical component of transitional justice mechanisms, aimed at providing redress to survivors of GBV and restoring their dignity. Reparations can take various forms, including financial compensation, healthcare, psychological support, and educational opportunities. In Nigeria, providing comprehensive reparations to GBV survivors is essential for their rehabilitation and empowerment. These reparations should be designed to address the specific needs of survivors and help them rebuild their lives. For instance, providing access to healthcare services, including mental health support, can significantly improve the well-being of GBV survivors (Amnesty International, 2018).

However, socio-cultural factors play a significant role in perpetuating GBV in Nigeria. Patriarchal norms, traditional practices, and gender stereotypes contribute to the normalization of violence against women and girls. Transitional justice mechanisms can address these socio-cultural factors by promoting societal change and fostering a culture of equality and respect (Connell, R. 2005; Merry, S. E. 2009). Truth commissions, for instance, can play a pivotal role in challenging harmful cultural practices and promoting gender equality. By documenting and publicly acknowledging the experiences of

GBV survivors, truth commissions can help shift societal attitudes and reduce the stigma associated with GBV (Hayner, 2010). Also, Education and awareness-raising are essential for addressing the root causes of GBV. Transitional justice mechanisms can support educational initiatives that promote gender equality and raise awareness about the harmful effects of GBV (Freire, P. 2000; Tibbitts, F. 2002). Educational programs should be integrated into school curricula and community outreach initiatives to educate people about gender equality and the importance of respecting women's rights. By fostering a culture of respect and equality, these initiatives can help prevent GBV and support long-term societal change (UNESCO, 2015).

Transitional justice mechanisms offer a comprehensive approach to addressing the root causes of GBV in Nigeria. By uncovering systemic patterns of abuse, promoting accountability, implementing legal and institutional reforms, providing reparations, addressing socio-cultural factors, and promoting education and awareness, these mechanisms can contribute to long-term solutions for combating GBV. Integrating transitional justice into national strategies is essential for creating a more just and equitable society where the rights and dignity of women and girls are upheld.

Case Studies and Examples

To illustrate the effectiveness of transitional justice mechanisms in combating gender-based violence (GBV), it is essential to examine specific case studies where these mechanisms have been implemented. The following case studies provide insights into how different countries have used transitional justice to address GBV and promote gender justice.

A. South Africa: Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), established in 1995, is a prominent example of a transitional justice mechanism that addressed GBV. The TRC aimed to uncover the truth about human rights violations committed during the apartheid era, promote national unity, and foster reconciliation (Goldblatt, B., & Meintjes, S. 1998).

According to Hayner, P. B. (2010), the key outcomes are enmeshed in:

i. Truth-Telling and Documentation: The TRC provided a platform for women to share their experiences of GBV, which were often overlooked in traditional justice systems. The Commission documented numerous cases of sexual violence, highlighting the intersection of race and gender in apartheid-era abuses.

ii. Gender-Specific Recommendations: The TRC made specific recommendations to address the systemic nature of GBV, including legal reforms and support services for survivors.

iii. Public Awareness: The process raised public awareness about the prevalence and impact of GBV, contributing to a broader societal understanding of gender inequality.

B. Sierra Leone: Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone, established after the civil war (1991-2002), sought to address human rights abuses, including widespread GBV. The Commission's mandate included investigating the causes and consequences of the conflict and making recommendations for preventing future violence.

According to Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission. (2004), the key outcomes are:

i. Focused Hearings on GBV: The Commission held special hearings to document the

experiences of women and girls who suffered sexual violence during the conflict. These hearings provided a safe space for survivors to testify.

ii. Reparations Program: Based on the Commission's recommendations, the Sierra Leonean government implemented a reparations program that included medical care, psychosocial support, and educational opportunities for GBV survivors.

iii. Legal Reforms: The Commission's final report called for significant legal reforms to protect women's rights and address GBV, leading to the enactment of new laws and policies.

C. Colombia: Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Non-Repetition

In Colombia, the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Non-Repetition, established as part of the 2016 peace agreement between the government and the FARC-EP, includes a strong focus on addressing GBV. This system integrates multiple transitional justice mechanisms, including a Truth Commission and a Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

According to Colombian Truth Commission. (2021)., the key outcomes are:

i. Gender Perspective: The Colombian Truth Commission has a dedicated Gender Working Group to ensure that the experiences of women and LGBTQ+ individuals are adequately documented and addressed.

ii. Reparations and Support: The system includes comprehensive reparations programs for GBV survivors, covering medical, psychological, and economic support.

iii. Legal Accountability: The Special Jurisdiction for Peace prosecutes those responsible for GBV, ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable and survivors receive justice.

D. Guatemala: Historical Clarification Commission

The Historical Clarification Commission (CEH) in Guatemala was established to investigate human rights violations during the country's civil war (1960-1996). The Commission paid particular attention to the gendered impacts of the conflict, including sexual violence against women.

According to Historical Clarification Commission (CEH) (1999), the key outcomes are:

i. Detailed Documentation: The CEH documented numerous cases of sexual violence and provided a comprehensive account of how GBV was used as a tool of war.

ii. Public Apologies and Memorials: The Commission's work led to public apologies from the government and the establishment of memorials to honor the victims of GBV.

iii. Policy Recommendations: The CEH made recommendations for legal and institutional reforms to protect women's rights and prevent future GBV.

E. Peru: Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR), established in 2001, investigated human rights abuses committed during the internal conflict between government forces and insurgent groups (1980-2000). The CVR specifically addressed the issue of sexual violence against women.

According to Peru Truth and Reconciliation Commission. (2003), the key outcomes are:

i. Special Hearings for Women: The CVR held special hearings to document the testimonies of women who suffered sexual violence during

the conflict.

ii. Reparations and Services: The Commission's recommendations led to the creation of reparations programs, including medical and psychological support for GBV survivors.

iii. Legal Reforms: The CVR's findings prompted legal reforms aimed at strengthening protections for women and ensuring justice for GBV cases.

These case studies demonstrate the effectiveness of transitional justice mechanisms in addressing the root causes of GBV. By uncovering systemic patterns of abuse, promoting accountability, implementing legal and institutional reforms, providing reparations, and addressing socio-cultural factors, these mechanisms can significantly contribute to combating GBV and supporting survivors. The lessons learned from these examples can inform the development and implementation of transitional justice strategies in Nigeria, helping to create a more just and equitable society.

Transitional Justice Theory

Transitional justice theory refers to the mechanisms and processes used by post-conflict or post-authoritarian societies to address large-scale human rights violations, restore dignity to victims, and ensure accountability for perpetrators. It involves judicial and non-judicial approaches, including truth commissions, prosecutions, reparations, and institutional reforms, with the aim of fostering reconciliation and preventing future atrocities (Teitel, 2003). A key aspect of transitional justice is its focus on addressing not only individual wrongs but also the systemic structures that perpetuate violence, inequality, and oppression. In contexts where gender-based violence (GBV) is widespread, transitional justice can address the root causes of violence by recognizing the systemic discrimination that enables such crimes and ensuring legal and institutional reforms that protect women's rights (Ni Aolain, 2009).

In Nigeria, where GBV has been exacerbated by prolonged conflict and systemic inequalities, transitional justice mechanisms provide a framework to combat this issue. Through truth commissions, the historical and systemic nature of GBV can be documented, revealing patterns of violence and discrimination against women, while judicial prosecutions hold perpetrators accountable, promoting a culture of justice rather than impunity (Okech, 2020). Reparations, including financial compensation and access to healthcare for survivors, help restore dignity, while institutional reforms, such as revising discriminatory laws and training law enforcement on gender sensitivity, are crucial for long-term change. Transitional justice thus acts as an enabler by addressing both immediate and structural aspects of GBV, fostering accountability and supporting survivors in their recovery (Okech, 2020; Ni Aolain, 2009).

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive research design to explore the role of transitional justice in addressing GBV. Qualitative research is ideal in targeting key stakeholders such as survivors of GBV, legal experts, human rights organizations, and members of truth commissions. This study utilized data secondarily gathered from reports, case studies, and legal documents related to transitional justice in Nigeria. For data analysis, a thematic approach was employed, where data is categorized based on recurring themes related to accountability, legal reform, reparations, and survivor rehabilitation. This method allows for a comprehensive understanding of how transitional justice mechanisms enable the fight against GBV in Nigeria.

High Prevalence of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Conflict Zones

According to a report by Amnesty International (2020), GBV, particularly sexual violence, has been systematically used as a weapon of war in conflict-affected areas in Nigeria, especially during the Boko Haram insurgency. Thousands of women and girls have been abducted, raped, and subjected to forced marriages and sexual slavery. This secondary data highlights the entrenched nature of GBV in conflict zones, illustrating the need for transitional justice mechanisms like truth commissions to document these abuses and recommend reparative measures for survivors (Amnesty International, 2020).

Impunity and Legal Gaps in Addressing GBV

Secondary data from Human Rights Watch (2021) reveal that Nigeria's legal framework remains inadequate in addressing GBV, with many cases either not prosecuted or poorly handled. The gaps in the judicial system, including delays in court proceedings, weak enforcement of GBV laws, and a lack of gender-sensitive legal structures, perpetuate a culture of impunity. Reports suggest that transitional justice mechanisms, such as judicial prosecutions and legal reforms, could close these accountability gaps by ensuring perpetrators are held responsible and survivors receive justice (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

Positive Impact of Reparations on GBV Survivors

A study by the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ, 2019) underscores the significance of reparations programs in addressing the needs of GBV survivors. In post-conflict settings, reparations such as financial compensation, psychological counseling, and healthcare have been shown to restore dignity and provide economic stability for survivors. In Nigeria, implementing such reparations through transitional justice frameworks could support survivors' recovery and long-term resilience, as well as contribute to social cohesion and healing (ICTJ, 2019).

Discussion of Findings

The findings highlight the critical role transitional justice mechanisms can play in addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in Nigeria, particularly in conflict-affected regions. However, mechanisms such as truth commissions, judicial prosecutions, reparations, and institutional reforms are essential tools in breaking the cycles of violence and impunity that often characterize post-conflict societies like Nigeria. One key finding is that truth commissions provide a vital platform for documenting and exposing the systemic nature of GBV, particularly in conflict zones like the Boko Haram insurgency-affected North-East region. By officially acknowledging the atrocities committed against women and girls, such as abduction, rape, and forced marriages, truth commissions create a historical record that legitimizes survivors' experiences and informs future interventions (Amnesty International, 2020). This documentation is crucial for revealing patterns of GBV, addressing the socio-cultural factors that perpetuate it, and creating the basis for legal and policy reforms to prevent recurrence. Another significant finding is the persistent impunity for GBV crimes in Nigeria due to gaps in the legal system. Reports from Human Rights Watch (2021) show that many cases of sexual and domestic violence are either inadequately addressed or entirely neglected by the courts, allowing perpetrators to escape justice. Transitional justice mechanisms, particularly judicial prosecutions, can help overcome this by establishing specialized courts or tribunals to expedite GBV cases and ensure perpetrators are held accountable. Strengthening the judicial framework through transitional justice will also help in repealing discriminatory laws and promoting gender-sensitive legal reforms. However, the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ, 2019) emphasizes the importance of

reparations, such as financial compensation, healthcare, and psychosocial support, in helping GBV survivors rebuild their lives. In the Nigerian context, offering reparations to victims of GBV would not only restore their dignity but also empower them economically and socially, reducing their vulnerability to further violence. Reparations programs must be gender-sensitive and holistic, addressing the psychological, physical, and economic impacts of GBV. By providing these reparations, transitional justice mechanisms can enhance survivor rehabilitation and contribute to broader social cohesion.

Summary and Conclusion

This term paper has explored the role of transitional justice mechanisms in combating gender-based violence (GBV) in Nigeria. Given the pervasive impact of GBV exacerbated by prolonged conflict and systemic inequalities, transitional justice provides a robust framework for addressing these deep-seated issues. The key components of transitional justice, truth commissions, judicial prosecutions, and institutional reforms play critical roles in uncovering systemic patterns of abuse, promoting accountability, and fostering a culture of reconciliation. Transitional justice mechanisms are critical enablers in the fight against GBV in Nigeria. They not only support survivors in their healing process but also contribute to creating a more just and equitable society. By uncovering systemic patterns of abuse, promoting accountability, implementing legal and institutional reforms, providing reparations, and addressing socio-cultural factors, transitional justice can significantly transform the landscape of gender justice in Nigeria. Integrating transitional justice into national strategies to combat GBV is essential for addressing the root causes of violence and ensuring long-term prevention. The lessons learned from the case studies presented in this paper underscore the potential of transitional justice to create lasting change. As Nigeria continues to grapple with the pervasive impact of GBV, the implementation of these mechanisms offers a path towards justice, reconciliation, and a future where the rights and dignity of all individuals are upheld.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis of transitional justice mechanisms and their potential to combat gender-based violence (GBV) in Nigeria, transitional justice mechanisms offer a comprehensive framework for addressing the root causes of GBV in Nigeria. By establishing truth-telling mechanisms, implementing legal and institutional reforms, providing reparations, promoting public awareness and education, fostering collaboration with civil society organizations, and ensuring gender-sensitive approaches, Nigeria can make significant strides in combating GBV and supporting survivors. The successful implementation of these recommendations requires a coordinated effort from the government, civil society, and the international community, paving the way for a more just and equitable society.

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