

**A STUDY OF THE MANAGEMENT OF SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, OSUN STATE,
NIGERIA**

Olugbenga Adetokunbo Efuntade, PhD
Dept. of Religion & Theology
University of the Western Cape, South Africa
olugbenga.efuntade@adelekeuniversity.edu.ng

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Abstract

This study investigated the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) and other forms of sexual violence within a religious community, the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in Osun State. It also sought to know how members perceived how such cases are managed both within families and within the church. The study population was 6, 036 SDA membership in Osun State out of which 177 sample size was used based on Fisher's formula. A questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The data gathered was analysed using the Statistical software Package for Service Solution (SPSS) version 20.0. This was presented in tables. Percentages were used as descriptors. The Chi-square was used for bi-variate analysis. Frequency tables and percentages were used as descriptors of the sample and for bi-variate analysis, chi-square was used. The level of significance/margin error was set at 0.05 (5%) for accepting or rejecting the research hypothesis. The study established occurrence of domestic violence, rape and sexual assaults within SDA families. It also established the same within the church. Both members and religious leaders were perpetrators of such violence. Although the denomination had family-building orientation programs, they were inadequate in eliminating domestic and sexual violence. Many cases of GBV were unreported because of fear, shame and stigma. The paper concludes with the recommendation to the SDA Church to strengthen its various arms responsible for family-building, counselling, advocacy and sanctioning erring leaders in order to mitigate the occurrence of GBV in the church.

Keywords: Gender-based violence, Seventh-day Adventist Church, religion, behaviour moderator, religion.

Introduction

A level of sexual and Gender Based Violence culture that was previously alien to the Nigerian culture has found ways into the Nigerian society. These violent behaviours portend grave challenge to both public health and human right. Dire consequences for victims (Labe et al, 2021, p.2; Tijah & Raphael, 2021, p.126-127) and the society at large are certain. Some have blamed the increase on the fact that perpetrators hardly get punished. In addition, victims of sexual violence do not report in most cases due to ignorance, shame, guilt and stigma (Eyong and Emechebe, 2019, p. 2). Solutions are being sought in all sectors of the society including the religious sector of the country.

In the research done by Akinleye, Asekun-Olarinmoye & Fawole (2021, p.27), religion was identified as “protective from perpetrating of Gender Based Violence (GBV).” Religion was also noted to be behaviour moderator, particularly as it affects sexuality and sexual behaviours (Abbott, Harris & Mollen, 2016). Religious communities and their leaders have been identified as important in combating GBV (USAIND Health Policy Initiative, p.4, 2009). This research assumes therefore that religion therefore should be able to minimize cases of GBV, particularly within the family structure. In a study by Adeleke, Olowookere, Hassan, Komolafe & Asekun-Olarinmoye (2012, p.191-192), most (93.2%) of the victims of GBV in the population researched were single (unmarried) people. This research works with the assumption that these young people resided and grew within family structure.

This research investigated the occurrence of GBV and how it is managed within the religious community of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church. The SDA Church, like many Christian organizations, places value on family life. Marriage is considered sacred and to be established on agape (selfless kind of) love with the aim of a life-long relationship (Ministerial Association General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005, p.329-330). This is evidenced by the creation of the family life ministries in the church created to strengthen families (especially of church members), helping married people to communicate more effectively and build stronger marriages (Adventist Family Ministries, 2022).

Statement of the Problem

In spite of efforts being made globally to stem the tide of Gender Based Violence (GBV), the phenomenon has continued to occur. In Nigeria there is increase in the number of GBV cases reported to law enforcement agencies. The Police Force in Osun State, Nigeria, particularly noted rising cases of rape and sexual assault being reported on a daily basis. Physical abuse of wives was the most prevalent followed by indecent sexual

behaviours and rape (Akinleye, Asekun-Olarinmoye & Fawole, 2021). Sadly, offenders have not met with strong legal sanctions for such behaviours (Azeez, 2022). Factors such as formal education and upward socioeconomic mobility have not produced significant mitigating effect on the occurrence of Gender Based Violence. This research investigated the occurrence of GBV within a faith (SDA) community in Osun State.

Christianity and sexual violence

The Bible as Christian scripture is regarded as guide for moral conduct of Christians. The Bible has injunctions regarding proper sexual conduct. For example, in the Old Testament Deuteronomy 22:23-25 (King James Version) describes rape as “evil” and prescribes death sentence for such behaviour. The New Testament of the Bible is not specific about rape but warns strongly against sexual immorality, not only in the physical act but including thoughts (Matthew 5:28; Mark 7:20-23; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:15-16; 7:1-2 *et cetera*). Stories about sexual violence in the Bible, such as that of Tamar and Bathsheba, should shape the minds of contemporary Christians about understanding and dealing with the evil of sexual violence (Moniz, 2019). It is therefore expected that Christian communities will exemplify high moral standards especially on the issue of sexuality; rape and sexual violence are not expected in Christian communities.

The SDA Church in Osun State

According to State of Osun (n.d), the state (Osun) was created on August 27, 1991 by the Federal Government of Nigeria under the military President Ibrahim Babangida. Osun is one of 37 states in the country. Osun State being in western Nigeria mainly consists of Yoruba people although there are different Nigerian ethnic groups resident there. In terms of religion, the state has Christians, Muslims and those who adhere to the African Traditional Religion.

The SDA Church in Osun State is part of the network of a global Christian denomination, the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church. The SDA Church began in mid-1800s in America as an “interconfessional movement” (Alalade 2008, p.8) and an offshoot of the William Miller group that preached the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The denomination has a sense of mission of telling the world about imminent, physical Second Advent of Jesus Christ (Alalade 2008, p. 8-12). Early SDAs had the sense of mandate and task of making the entire world ready for this Second Coming of Jesus Christ (Babalola 2002, p.12). This sense of urgency of the global mandate made its missionary, Elder David Caldwell Babcock, arrive in Nigeria in 1914. Babcock established a mission

outpost in Erunmu (now in Oyo State) from where SDA message spread to other parts of Nigeria (Alalade, 2008, p.45-46).

According to Adewuyi (2020), one Jacob Faleye Alao, an indigene of Inisa, Osun State, was Babcock's interpreter. Alao would later take the message of SDA Church to his hometown, Inisa, in 1917 where a small congregation was established. The message would also spread to Oke-Ila in Osun state from Ipoti Ekiti through efforts of Pa Adaramola Osundina and Pa Adaramola Odedun. Later on, the denomination established Adventist Grammar School in Ede, Osun State on the 29th of February, 1960; with a missionary educator, Pastor E.G. Ellstron, as the pioneer principal but soon replaced by Mr. Cross and later on, the first indigenous SDA worker, Mr. E.O. Dare took over the administration of the school as principal (Kehinde, 2016, n.p).

Adewuyi (2020) notes the process of establishing the administrative entity of the SDA Church in Osun state called Osun Conference of SDA Church. This entity came from the defunct West Nigeria Conference by decision of the executive committee of the defunct West Nigeria Conference on May 15, 2011. Having gone through different levels of the denominational procedure, the Osun Conference (a self-sustaining administrative entity) of the SDA Church was inaugurated on November 10, 2012. The total membership as at the time of inauguration was 3, 512. The newly established Conference operated 11 districts (smaller administrative units that supervised groups of local churches).

According to Osun Conference of SDA Church (2022, p.31), the demonization has since grown larger; as at September, 2022 it had 15 districts 6,372 members. The districts were Ajamapo (in Ile-Ife) with 407 members, Alaafia (in Osogbo) 313 members, Alukunwodo (Osogbo) 335 members, Ayetoro (Osogbo), 462 members, Chapel of Redemption (Ile-Ife) 211 members, Ede 812 members, Ikirun 518 members, Ila 224 members, Ilesha 223 members, Inisa 328 members, Irewole 238 members, Iwo 86 members, Lagere (Ile-Ife) 1124, Oke-Ila 821 members and Olanrewaju with 270 members.

The SDA Church is interested in strengthening family relationships (Adventist Family Ministries 2022, n.p). Apart from eschatological concerns, the SDA Church also addresses pragmatic issues germane to human flourishing such as health, family wholeness et cetera. Therefore the SDA church, based on its understanding of the Bible, promotes healthy, non-violent relationships within the family structure (Adventist Family Ministries, 2021). Members of Adventist families are supposed to emulate Jesus Christ in building up one another instead of manifesting abusive behaviour to one another. The fact that humans are created in God's image and have been redeemed through Jesus Christ should reflect in how members of families treat each other.

Recognizing the reality and sad occurrences of violence within Christian families, the SDA Church therefore feels it has three main responsibilities to families, namely, caring and responding to those experiencing violence, strengthening family life and lastly "...be alert and responsive to abuse within the families of our congregations and our communities, and to declare that such abusive behavior is a violation of Seventh-day Adventist Christian standards" (Adventist Family Ministries, 2021).

According to the Seventh-day Adventist Church (2009), the denomination launched a program against domestic violence called "end it now," given the nomenclature *enditnow*. It is an initiative established to highlight the occurrence and the need to end domestic violence and to advocate for victims. The program mobilizes members of the SDA Church around the world in order to confront and end violence in families. Two agencies of the SDA Church, the Department of Women's Ministries and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), partnered to establish this program in 2009. *Enditnow* recognizes that men, women and children are victims of domestic violence.

Wade (2022, n.p) reported the campaign by Adventist Women's Ministry (AWM) in Nigeria against domestic violence. The campaign which held August 27, 2022 focused on the abuse of power and violence against people within the family inclusive of men, women and children. Although the campaign held across Nigeria, Wade (2022) reported that members of the AWM in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria, marched through the city with signs projecting inscriptions that spoke against violence against women, men and children. Different news media such as television, radio and print media reported the campaign. The campaign highlighted the necessity to advocate on behalf of victims of power abuse within the family.

Osun Conference of SDA Church is made up of 34 local churches with membership of 6, 036 people as at 2021 (Office of Archives, Statistic and Research, n.d). The Conference had different departments such as the Health Ministries, Children's Ministries, Communication, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty, Publishing Ministries, Women's Ministries, Youth Ministries, Sabbath School and Personal Ministries, Planned Giving and Trust Services, Ministerial Association and Family Ministries. These ministries were headed by departmental directors who are mainly full time clergy men. A few other departments were headed by lay men and women. The Women's Ministries and the Family Ministries are of particular interest to the subject of this research.

Research Objectives

This researched focused on achieving the following objectives

1. To find out the level of occurrence of gender based and sexual violence within families who are members of the SDA Church in Osun State
2. To find the level of occurrence of gender based and sexual violence within or among members of the SDA Church in Osun State who are not members of the same family
3. To find out the perception of SDA members in Osun State on how their church programs and policies have impacted on issues of gender based and sexual violence within families
4. To find out the perception of SDA members in Osun State on the management of GBV in the church.
5. To establish a benchmark for future comparison studies on different scenarios such is to compare faith-based and faith-based communities, SDA and other denominations and Christianity in comparison with other religious communities such as Islam and African Traditional Religion adherents.

Research questions

Pursuant of the objectives in the above paragraph, this study aimed at answering the proceeding questions:

- a. What is the level of occurrence of Gender Based Violence within SDA families in Osun State?
- b. What is the level of occurrence of Gender Based Violence in SDA Churches in Osun State?
- c. What are the perceptions of members on the management of Gender Based Violence within the family structure?
- d. What are the perceptions of members of the SDA Church on how the denomination responds to cases of Gender Based Violence that occurred within the church?

Research Design

This method adopted the quantitative, particularly the descriptive cross-sectional study approach. This approach is suited for examining “the prevalence of some outcome at a certain moment in time’ (Thomas, 2020).

Sample Size Determination

The minimum sample size will be determined using the Fisher's formula. The Prevalence rate of Physical and Sexual Intimate Partner violence within the last 12 months in Nigeria is 13.8% according to the Global Database on Violence against women.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 Pq}{d^2}$$

Where n= the desired sample size

P = working prevalence rate

q = 1-p

d =margin of sampling error tolerated at 95% degree of confidence =5%.

Using a prevalence rate of 13.8%

P = 0.138

q = (1-0.138) = 0.862

d = 5% = 0.05

z = 1.96

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times (0.138) \times (0.862)}{(0.05)^2}$$

Therefore n = 182.79

Validating n

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + \frac{(n_0-1)}{N}}$$

n = sample size

n₀ = 182.79

N = estimated population of SDA church members in Osun (6036)

$$n = \frac{182.79}{1 + \frac{(182.79-1)}{6036}}$$

n = 177.44, therefore, total sample size = 177 respondents

Data Collection Tool

The study adopted a quantitative approach to research A pretested and validated self-administered questionnaire was given to get answers from respondents. Questionnaire pretesting is a simple approach used to determine if the instrument poses any difficulty to

the respondents (Ikart 2019:1) The Reliability test done showed the Cronbach's Alpha Score of 0.839 indicating that the questionnaire was reliable for the study.

Data Analysis

The data generated in this research study was entered, cleaned, coded and analysed using the Statistical software Package for Service Solution (SPSS) version 20.0.

Frequency tables and percentages were used as descriptors of the sample and for bi-variate analysis, chi-square was used. The level of significance/margin error was set at 0.05 (5%) for accepting or rejecting the research hypothesis.

Ethical Considerations

This study administered questionnaire to respondents who were 18 years old and above. Each respondent was duly educated on the purpose of the study and their verbal consent was obtained. Apart from this, each of the respondents was informed that they could withdraw from participation in the study or decline filling out the questionnaire. The identities of the respondents were anonymous; their addresses and contacts were not disclosed in the instruments. Their responses were made confidential and strictly to be used for the research.

Discussions on the Findings

This section commences with the summarized depiction of those who responded to the questionnaire. In various subheadings, features such as demography, the denomination's districts participants belonged to, the analysis of the prevalence of GBV, their perceptions on how families and the denomination managed the phenomenon *et cetera* are presented.

Demography of the respondents

Out of the 177 respondents in this study, 79 (44.6%) identified themselves as males and while 98 (55.4%) respondents indicated they female. In terms of age group, those who were between 18-23 years were 77 (43.5% of the lot), those who were 24-29 years old were 22 (12.4% of the respondents), those who were 30-35 years of age were 19 (10.7%) and those who were 36 years and above were 59 persons (33.3% of the respondents).

The single people among the respondents were 98 persons. They constituted the majority that is 55.4% of the respondents. Those were married were 71 persons which was 40.1% of the respondents. Two persons (1.1% of the group) were separated from their spouses, 1 (0.6%) person was divorced and 5 persons were widows/widowers (which is 2.8% of the respondents).

In regards to the level of education, those who had obtained their university degree or Higher National Diploma were the highest in number; they were 54 persons (30.5% of the group). This was followed by 48 persons (27.1%) who had earned their post graduate degrees and those who had the Ordinary level/school certificates were 39 (22.0%). Those who had the National Diploma/National Certificate of Education and Primary School Leaving Certificate were 26 persons (14.7% of the lot) and the least respondents were 10 persons (5.6% of the lot) had Primarily School Leaving Certificate. Out of all respondents, 76 (42.9%) were students, 70 (39.5%) were employed, 21 (11.9%) were traders while 10 persons (5.6%) were unemployed.

Table 1: Number of respondents per district of SDA Church in Osun State

SN	DISTRICT	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	Ajamopo	4	2.3
2	Alaafia	24	13.6
3	Alekuwodo	17	9.6
4	Ayetoro	5	2.8
5	Chapel of redemption	12	6.8
6	Ede	45	25.4
7	Ibokun	1	0.6
8	Ikirun	5	2.8
9	Ilesa	5	2.8
10	irewole	6	3.4
11	Iwo	4	2.3
12	Lagere	16	9.0
13	Oke-Ila	10	5.6
14	Olanrewaju	8	4.5
15	Ila	15	8.5
	Total	177	100.0

Source: field survey (2022)

Occurrence of Gender Based Violence within SDA Church members families in Osun State

This section revealed the level of awareness and perception of members of the denomination regarding the occurrence of behaviours such as rape, unwanted sexual

touches, messages, physical assault, and domestic violence within family and church settings of members of the SDA Church.

Table 2: Occurrence of Gender Based Violence among SDAs in Osun Conference

S/N	Statement	Yes (%)	No (%)	I don't know (%)	Not applicable (%)
1	I have experienced unwanted sexual touches or massages from a church member	23 (13.0)	138 (78.0)	3 (1.7)	13 (7.3)
2	Someone I know has experienced unwanted sexual touches or massages from church members	59 (33.3)	99 (55.9)	16 (9.0)	3 (1.7)
3	I have been raped or sexually assaulted by church member	9 (5.1)	156 (88.1)	3 (1.7)	9 (5.1)
4	I know at least a person who was sexually assaulted by church member	40 (22.6)	113 (63.8)	17 (9.6)	7 (4.0)
5	Some pastors, elders and church leaders sexually assault church members	45 (25.4)	75 (42.4)	55 (31.1)	2 (1.1)
6	There are occurrences of domestic violence in Adventist families	92 (52.0)	33 (18.6)	47 (26.6)	5 (2.8)
7	Females are the major victims of sexual or domestic violence	129 (72.9)	30 (16.9)	16 (9.0)	2 (1.1)
8	Males are often victims of sexual or domestic violence	51 (28.8)	85 (48.0)	37 (20.9)	4 (2.3)
9	I have been a victim of domestic violence in my family	15 (8.5)	148 (83.6)	10 (5.6)	4 (2.3)
10	An immediate or extended family member has sexually assaulted me before at home	15 (8.5)	145 (83.2)	9 (5.1)	8 (4.5)
11	My spouse has physically assaulted me before	5 (2.8)	138 (78.0)	5 (2.8)	29 (16.4)
12	Sexual assault is common in SDA church members families	12 (6.8)	72 (40.7)	90 (50.8)	3 (1.7)

Source: field survey (2022)

The table 2 above shows the perceptions of the respondents on the occurrence of GBV among SDAs in Osun State (Conference). This section focuses more on those who answered in the affirmative of such occurrence. Other responses can be seen from the table 2. It revealed that 13.0% of the respondents have had a firsthand experience of

sexual violations like unwanted sexual touches and communications from a church member. A whopping 33.3% of them knew at least one (other) person who had experienced such. In addition 9 out of the 177 respondents had been raped or experienced other forms of sexual assault by church members. The number of those who admitted knowing someone who had been raped in the church is even higher, 40 persons (22.6%) of the lot. The research further revealed that 45 respondents (25.4%) believed that perpetrators of such behaviour were church leaders like pastors and elders.

This research also found out perceptions of the occurrence of domestic violence within SDA families in Osun Conference. More than half of those who responded, 92 persons (52.0%), affirmed occurrence of violence in SDA families. Out of the respondents, 72.9% believed females were the major victims of such violence while 28.8% believed males were victims of domestic violence in SDA families in Osun State. Those who indicated to have been direct victims of domestic violence were 15 (8.5%).

In addition, 15 respondents (8.5%) indicated that an immediate or extended family member had sexually assaulted them within their home. Also, 5 respondents (2.8%) said their spouses had physically assaulted them. In terms of respondents' perception of the prevalence of sexual assault within families, 12 respondents (6.8%) believed it was a common phenomenon within SDA families.

The researcher therefore concludes that SDA Church religion had not sufficiently regulated or moderated behaviours of members regarding GBV issues. Much less occurrence of rape, sexual assault and domestic violence was expected of a Christian community that placed high value on the family as ordained by God. The ideal thing is that based on the teachings and efforts of the denomination on family life, there would be zero occurrence.

Category of the gender who suffer more sexual assault/violence and domestic violence

This section discusses the sex and gender category suffering in sexual assault, rape and domestic violent situations. The study revealed that both male and female SDA members in Osun Conference of the denomination experienced rape or other forms of sexual assault perpetrated by fellow church members as indicated in the table 3 below. The study further revealed that both male and female family members in the SDA denomination in Osun Conference suffer violence in domestic conflict situations as indicated in table 4 below.

**Table 3: Sex/Gender Cross-tabulation of Rape or Sexual Assault by church member
I have been raped or sexually assaulted by church member * Sex
Cross-tabulation**

			al sex		Total
			male	female	
b3 i have been raped or sexually assaulted by church member	yes	Count	3	6	9
		% within al sex	3.8%	6.1%	5.1%
	no	Count	68	88	156
		% within al sex	86.1%	89.8%	88.1%
	i dont know	Count	2	1	3
		% within al sex	2.5%	1.0%	1.7%
	not applicable	Count	6	3	9
		% within al sex	7.6%	3.1%	5.1%
Total		Count	79	98	177
		% within al sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: field survey (2022)

It revealed that 3 males (3.8% of the male respondents) had been raped or sexually assaulted by a church member, while 6 females (6.1% of the female respondents) had been raped or sexually assaulted by a church member. This implied females suffered more sexual violence than their male counterparts and that the males were also victims.

Table 4: Sex/Gender Cross-tabulation of domestic violence within family

			al sex		Total
			male	female	
b9 i have been a victim of domestic violence in my family	Yes	Count	3	12	15
		% within al sex	3.8%	12.2%	8.5%
	No	Count	69	79	148
		% within al sex	87.3%	80.6%	83.6%
	i dont know	Count	5	5	10
		% within al sex	6.3%	5.1%	5.6%
	not applica ble	Count	2	2	4
		% within al sex	2.5%	2.0%	2.3%
Total		Count	79	98	177
		% within al sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The *Table 4* above shows 3 males (3.8% of male respondents) were victims of domestic violence in their families, while 12 females (12.2% of female respondents) were victims of domestic violence in their families. There therefore more female victims of domestic violence although males also suffered in domestic violent situations.

Perceptions of SDA members on the management of Gender Based Violence within the family structure

This section revealed the opinions of SDA Church members regarding how cases of GBV are managed within the family structure.

Table 5: Management of Sexual and Gender based violence within the SDA church

S/N	Statement	Yes (%)	No (%)	I don't know (%)	Not applicable (%)
1	I reported when I was sexually assaulted by a family member to another responsible family member	16 (9.0)	66 (37.3)	12 (6.8)	83 (46.9)
2	I think victims of violence and sexual assault speak out and report such to family members	69 (39.0)	53 (29.9)	48 (27.1)	7 (4.0)
3	Victims of violence and sexual abuse get justice when they report incidence to family members	52 (29.4)	61 (34.5)	57 (32.2)	7 (4.0)
4	I reported when I was sexually assaulted at home to a church leader	22 (12.4)	46 (26.0)	18 (10.2)	91 (51.4)
5	Victims of domestic violence and sexual assault report or speak out to church leaders	56 (31.6)	38 (21.5)	62 (35.0)	21 (11.9)
6	Victims of sexual assaults that happen in the church inform church leaders	51 (28.8)	35 (19.8)	76 (42.9)	15 (8.5)
7	The church makes it easy for victims of domestic and sexual violence to report to church leaders.	57 (32.2)	48 (27.1)	63 (35.6)	9 (5.1)
8	Victims are too ashamed to report to church leaders.	107 (60.5)	26 (14.7)	43 (24.3)	1 (0.6)
9	Victims are afraid to report to church leaders.	107 (60.5)	18 (10.2)	47 (26.6)	5 (2.8)
10	Victims of sexual assault and violence are intimidated and exposed to ridicule by church leaders.	48 (27.1)	50 (28.2)	70 (39.5)	9 (5.1)
11	The church helps victims get justice.	68 (38.4)	34 (19.2)	67 (37.9)	8 (4.5)
12	The church buries cases without victims getting justice.	32 (18.1)	60 (33.9)	79 (44.6)	6 (3.4)
13	The church works with police or law enforcement agencies	48 (27.1)	45 (25.4)	75 (42.4)	9 (5.1)

	to ensure victims get justice.				
14	The church adequately organizes programs that informs members about avoiding domestic and sexual violence.	109 (61.6)	32 (18.1)	30 (16.9)	6 (3.4)
15	My general opinion is that the church handles cases of sexual and gender-based violence in a positive and helpful manner.	100 (56.5)	20 (11.3)	54 (30.5)	3 (1.7)
16	The SDA church has a policy against domestic violence.	100 (56.5)	21 (11.9)	55 (31.1)	1 (0.6)
17	The church is better positioned to tackle domestic and sexual violence than government.	94 (53.1)	36 (20.3)	44 (24.9)	3 (1.7)
18	I feel confident in the way and manner the church handles cases of domestic and sexual violence.	75 (42.4)	44 (24.9)	52 (29.4)	6 (3.4)

Source: field survey (2022)

Table 5 above shows the management of sexual and gender-based violence within the SDA Church. From the data gathered, only 9.0% of respondents indicated that they reported they were sexually assaulted by a family member, while 37.3% did not report. Furthermore, 39.0% of respondents believed victims of violence and sexual assault speak out and report such to family members, while 29.9% disagreed victims reported to family members. This research shows that 29.4% of respondents thought victims of violence and sexual abuse get justice when they report incidence to family members, while 34.5% disagreed with the statement. In addition, 12.4% of respondents indicated that they reported their sexual assault experience at home to a church leader, while 26.0% did not report to any church leader. Also, 31.6% of respondents opined that victims of domestic violence and sexual assault report or speak out to church leaders, while 21.5% of respondents disagreed with the statement.

The study also revealed that 28.8% of respondents opined that victims of sexual assaults that happen in the church inform church leaders, while 19.8% disagreed with the statement, and 42.9% do not know their response. It is also significant to note that only 32.2% of respondents agreed with the statement “the church makes it easy for victims of domestic and sexual violence to report to church leaders”, while 27.1% disagreed with the statement. A whopping 60.5% of respondents thought victims were often too ashamed to

report to their undesirable sexual encounters to church leaders, 14.7% disagreed that victims were too ashamed to report to church leadership. Equally worthy of note is that 60.5% of respondents indicated that victims were afraid to report to church leaders, while 10.5% disagreed with the statement, 29.4% did not know if they felt confident in their church's handling of the issue.

Furthermore, 27.1% of respondents agreed with the statement "victims of sexual assault and violence are intimidated and exposed to ridicule by church leaders", while 28.2% also disagreed with the statement. Also, 38.4% indicated that the church helped victims get justice, while 19.2% disagreed with such position. Out of the respondents, 18.1% thought that the church buried (deliberately ensures victims are silenced in) cases without victims getting justice while 33.9% disagreed with the thought. Also, 27.1% claimed that "the church works with police or law enforcement agencies to ensure victims get justice", while 25.4% disagreed with the statement.

In terms of how the SDA in Osun Conference educate members regarding GBV, 61.6% of respondents opined that the church adequately and regularly organized programs that informed members about avoiding domestic and sexual violence, while 18.1% disagreed with the position. In addition, 56.5% of respondents agreed with the statement "my general opinion is that the church handles cases of sexual and gender-based violence in a positive and helpful manner", while 11.3% disagreed with the statement.

Out of all the 177 respondents, 56.5% believed that the SDA church had policies against domestic violence, while 11.9% did not think the denomination had such policies. In terms of the relevance of the church in addressing domestic and sexual violence, 53.1% of respondents believed that the church was better positioned to tackle domestic and sexual violence than government, while 20.3% of respondents disagreed with such notion. It is significant to note that only 42.2% of respondents opined that they felt very confident in the way and manner the church handled cases of domestic and sexual violence, 24.9% of respondents was not confident in the church's handling of domestic and sexual violence while 3.4% did not find the statement applicable to them.

Further opinions of respondents on the management of GBV in SDA Osun Conference

This section highlights comments of respondents to the questionnaire under the section that gave them the freedom to write their thoughts that might not have been captured in previous sections of the questionnaire. They were encouraged to write freely in the space provided. Their comments have been grouped in the table below. This section will focus on comments that were not addressed in the previous sections of the questionnaire.

Table 6: Comments on occurrence and management of gender-based violence/sexual violence in SDA families and church

S/N	Statement	Frequency	Percentage
1	Praying to God that He gives us wisdom to address this kind of issue in the church	13	7.3
2	Ladies in the church should avoid indecent dressing, and programs on the sexual assault and domestic violence should be conducted in the church	5	2.8
3	The church should have a counseling unit for the youth in the church on matters like this, as well as give women and ladies voice of hearing in the church and family.	10	5.6
4	Sexual assault should be cases should be treated with love and care, not judging the individuals based on what happened	5	2.8
5	I think the pastors should be warned, most of them assault the ladies in the church	7	4.0
6	Cases of sexual violence has not been heard in the SDA family, so it is not very common among us.	18	10.2
7	The church should try to help the victims of domestic and sexual violence.	6	3.4
8	Our parents are pretending all is well while many families are suffering silently	1	0.6
9	The church is the best place to handle domestic and sexual violence	7	4.0
10	Some members are being abused sexually but prefer to keep it within, considering their reputation	3	1.7
11	The church does not handle cases of assault with urgency and the inaction of the church hinders justice on such matters.	1	0.6
	No comments	101	57.1
	Total	177	100.0

Source: field survey (2022)

According to the data gathered, 13 respondents made the comment “praying to God that He gives us wisdom to address this kind of issue in the church”. This suggests that the church should resort to spiritual actions like prayer in order to stem the tide of GBV. Furthermore, 5 respondents blamed some occurrences of sexual violence to indecent dressing among ladies. They counseled that ladies in the church should avoid indecent dressing. Also, 10 respondents made the comment “the church should have a counseling unit for the youth in the church on matters like this, as well as give women and ladies

voice of hearing in the church and family”. The last comment emphasized two things, namely, the need for youth counseling and for women to be heard. This may suggest that women’s voice may have been suppressed in the church.

In addition, 5 respondents made the comment “Sexual assault should be cases should be treated with love and care, not judging the individuals based on what happened”. This may suggest that both victims and perpetrators may feel judged or condemned thereby making it more difficult for victims and their families to speak out. Furthermore, 6 respondents wanted the church to provide some forms of help to victims of domestic and sexual violence. This help may include post trauma counseling, medical assistance and so on.

One respondent made the comment “our parents are pretending all is well while many families are suffering silently”. In a similar order, 3 respondents made the comment “some members are being abused sexually but prefer to keep it within, considering their reputation.” This speaks to the shame and stigma that may be experienced by victims of sexual violence which coerces victims into silence (United Nations, 2017). Since church people are often expected to be perfect morally, when sexual violence occurs, victims may not speak up.

Conclusion

The SDA church in Osun State Nigeria should be more intentional in being an agent of behavioural reform. Although part of a global denomination’s focus on proclaiming the gospel, warning the world about the imminent literal Second Advent of Christ and highlighting the necessity for humans to keep the whole Decalogue, SDAs in Osun Conference should rise up to the task of eliminating GBV to barest minimum. The task of the church should increase raising awareness about the ills of GBV, organizing more programs to strengthening families, counseling, preaching and working more with law enforcement agencies to stem the tide of GBV. Also it is important for the church to investigate and sanctioning pastors and leaders found culpable in sexual violence. This will boost their members’ confidence to report cases of sexual violence.

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