



## **‘GET RICH FAST’ SYNDROME AND THE RITUAL KILLINGS OF WOMEN IN SOUTH WEST NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The fight to halt violence against women is still a huge struggle. Unfortunately, ritual related crime of “get rich fast” syndrome has further exacerbated violence against women in Nigeria -which is a particularly extreme kind of violence against women. In order to prepare ritualistic concoctions that can make the offenders wealthy, protect and advance them, ritualists target the breasts, vulva, ovaries, head, and other physical parts of women and girls. Existing research have studied kidnapping for ritual, its consequences for security and prevalence targeting minors, lunatics, the physically impaired and albinos but little attention had focused on the “get rich fast” syndrome of ritual killing as a form of gender-based violence against women in Nigeria. The study explained ritual related crime considered a pervasive trend against women by men in south-western Nigeria as an absurd get “rich fast syndrome”. The study detailed how women fall victims, their relationship with the male perpetrators and the reason for this act against women. Three Nigerian newspapers—the Punch, the Sun, and Vanguard—that covered ritual-related crimes from January 2019 to June 2022 had their content analyzed. These chosen publications are widely read and have their headquarters in Lagos south west Nigeria. The states of Oyo, Lagos, and Ogun were deliberately chosen because they are economically strong, draw young women looking for better opportunities and have a disproportionately high incidence of criminal vices. A total of 1008 publications were analysed during the period under review. The results reveal that 54 men with just one woman who acted as an accomplice to her husband was involved in the ritual related killing of women. This shows that males are the ones who commit crimes against women related to rituals, therefore making it gender based violence against women.*

*The result also shows that women are more likely than men to be victims of crimes associated to rituals, reasons for this include women not being physically strong like the men, these women trusted their male partners who use romance, her quest for marriage as a bait to lure and extract her bodily parts. The result also shows that social – cultural beliefs as well as patriarchy which see women as less than men and next in line after slaves to be used for ritual purposes are also contributing factors to the slaying of women for ritualistic get rich fast money. Also, the result shows that another reason for ritualistic men targeting women is the low status of women where her reproductive parts like her breast, vulva and other parts are deemed portend for get rich fast concoctions to be prepared by herbalist.*

*Discussions on ritual crimes are generally broad, but women are being targeted for their body parts by desperate men who, with the help of ritual doctors, prepare these severed female parts for quick money rituals. Ritual-related crime against women demands immediate attention. Thus, in order to stop this terrible trend, the government must apply a gender lens to address ritual-related crime and use all available tools to ensure that it is completely removed from society. Addressing crime will also address gender-exacerbated violence against women.*

**Key words:** *ritual crime, get rich fast syndrome, domestic violence, yahoo plus.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Increasing rate of ritual motivated crimes: a global perspective.**

The terms human sacrifice, occult ritual, and ritual killing have all been used to describe ritual crimes (Nwakanma, Emmanuel & Abu, 2020). Ritual-based crimes involve the gruesome removal of human body parts, the extraction of physiological fluids, and outright murder carried out in secrecy to gather body parts needed for money-making magic, promotion, and protection (Agazue, 2021; Aghawenu, 2020). Ritual related crimes have been described as weird and shocking in Europe (Adinkrah, 2005). The Aztecs of Mexico sacrificed people as part of their religious rituals. Human sacrifice was the most serious and expensive ritual sacrifice practice in pre-colonial Africa but this has since been abolished. Oyewole (2005) but despite the abolition, ritual crime is afflicting African communities and is an act that Africans are familiar with and has sadly worsen with modernity and technology (Smith, 2001; Aghawenu, 2020).

No doubt, the world, Africa especially is grappling with ritual crimes which has been considered as a social menace whereby human beings are offered as an object of sacrifice



which involves killing or severing the body part such as the head, genitals, breasts, eyes, intestine, arms and legs as well as exhumed dead body for the purpose of using it as an object of ritual sacrifice to a god or spirit aim to acquire good fortune and favour (Odeyemi, 2018). It is seen as the highest form of sacrifice or considered as a last resort when all efforts have seemingly failed in one's quest for wealth and favour. Writers on ritual related crimes attributed the crimes in Africa to poverty, religious belief, greed, superstition (Aghawenu, 2020; Obineke, 2021). In 2015, Adinkrah Mensah, one of such writers, attested to this in his article titled "Ritual Homicides in Contemporary Ghana" that those who commit ritual murders do so for selfish gain. Despite the abolition, laws and modernity, people continue to engage in animist and human rituals and witch doctors are found in practically all towns and cities in Africa. (Obineke, 2021).

For Oyewole (2015), ritual crimes can be better understood as article of faith deeply rooted in the belief that magical potions prepared with human heads, breasts, tongues, eyes, and genitals can enhance one's political and financial fortunes, and protect against all forms of dangers. According to him, this belief system has flourished in Nigeria and other parts of Africa amidst widespread poverty, insecurity, political alienation and ritual traditions. The profundity of such ritually motivated crime was highlighted by a private organization called *Under The Sun* which recorded albinos' attacks and deaths, rape, mutilations, attempted abductions, and missing person cases in over 28 African nations. The reports stated that there were 200 killings and close to 400 assaults on people who have albinism in these African nations and the USA for ritual purposes due to their inherent skin type (Barnett, 2001).

Certainly, ritual killings continue to occur in many cultures, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa like Nigeria, Ghana Tanzania and Senegal and these crimes are reported in the media to be pervasive. The mentally challenged, children, the elderly, persons living with albinism are victims for ritualistic purposes in Africa (Igwe, 2010). Politics of Africa is largely amoral, democratic norms are violated with impunity and the state is run for the selfish interest of the few (Osaghae, 1994). Politicians are alleged to be responsible for ritual killings in Liberia, Nigeria, Ghana and the Gambia in order to increase their electoral success. Ritual related crimes in Tanzania, Malawi, Senegal, Liberia, Ghana, and South Africa usually increased during festive season and these crimes are committed by people from all works of life ( Ramoneka, 1994; Peterside, 2021). People are slain in Malawi for their bones, while in South Africa witches' ceremonial practices involve the use of human body parts known as muthi slaughter. Ritual is one of the means to attain and maintain a position of power in many African nations (Nwolise, 2013; Smith, 2001).

In Nigeria, new types of ritual crimes have regrettably emerged as a result of civilization, globalization, and internet use. Yahoo-Yahoo Boys, Yahoo Plus, Baddoo Cult, and other crimes involving rituals are problems in Nigeria (Aghawenu, 2020; Peterside, 2021; Jamiu, 2021). When approaching the ritual killing debacle from a more spiritual viewpoint, Jamiu (2021) claimed that there is a type where the Yahoo boy will receive the money from the ebora (a ghost) when the proper sacrifices with human parts have been made. Such a sacrifice can compel a foreigner to comply with all of the Yahoo Boy's demands, including sending him millions of dollars (Ekong, 2002).

In Lagos, women's pants were targeted by ritualists because they thought they might make them a lot of money. While the Yahoo plus online scammers utilize the body parts of women, such as their severed fingers, sleep with their corpses in a room for days, eat their faeces, take spiritual baths in public while it's still daylight, and only appear in their underwear while taking money (Peterside, 2021). Many people who want wealth and power, such as politicians and businesspeople, often employ human parts as good luck charms and as weapons against actual and imagined opponents (Jamiu, 2021; Adinkrah, 2015; Oyewole, 2016).

The study was guided by the following research questions

- 1: What gender commits ritual crime more?
- 2: What is the relationship between the victim and the perpetrators?
- 3: Why do the perpetrators commit ritual crime?
- 4: Why are women targeted for ritualistic crime?

### **Gender based violence**

Gender based violence occurs when male and female are treated in a way that prevents them from realizing their full potential in terms of their physical and mental states at domestic and instituted levels (Agbo & Choji, 2014). Gender based violence against women promoted by patriarchy are in the form of marital rape, female genital mutilation, dowry-related violence, sexual abuse of female children, battering, and other harmful traditional practices due to power imbalances (Ayodapo, 2012). In Nigeria, the rate of violence against women is increasing daily with two out of every three women experiencing abuse and fatalities (Oluremi, (2015).

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime UNODC reported in 2021 that a lady was murdered by family members every 11 minutes in 2020 with 81,000 women killed worldwide. Women have had their eyes go blind, their teeth pulled, their arm broken, and their businesses destroyed by their husbands ,lovers ; however due to pressure from extended family members, institutional bottlenecks, lack of support, such abused women after rights organizations and the police have worked to have such abusive men arrested so that they can face the law, these women will, much to the dismay of rights/law enforcement officers, turn around and secure the unconditional release of their spouses (Dutton, & Golant, 1995).

Domestic violence occurs globally (UNICEF, 2005). Partner related physical assaults in West Africa, in particular, domestic violence is prevalent and reportedly justified and condoned in some cultures. For instance, 56% of Indian women surveyed by an agency justified wife-beating on grounds like –bad cook, disrespectful to in-laws, producing more girls, leaving home without informing, among others. To put it another way, behaviors that are regarded as violating gender roles might drive violence. In fact, research has linked male control of household decision-making to partner violence. Domestic violence occurs globally (UNICEF, 2005).

The meaning of violence was expanded and explained as a broad manifestation that might take both physical and non-physical forms and occur on both a personal and structural level. () 'Violence exists when people are influenced in such a way that their actual physical and mental realizations fall short of their potential realizations' (ibid.). psychological violence includes lies, brainwashing, other types of indoctrination, threats, and other forms that serve to reduce mental potentialities' (ibid.) and does not prioritize the influence of one form over the other. Domestic violence, according to Snugg et al., is defined as "past or present physical and/or sexual violence between former or current intimate partners."(Agbo & Choji, 2014).

### **Domestic Violence against women in Nigeria**

Violence is often described as the intentional use of force to harm or kill others (Sciver 2015). While this understanding of violence is pragmatically correct, it ignores the many other types of injury that can be inflicted, such as psychological, economic, and social injury, the fact that violence is not always associated with a clear actor, and the impact of violations of one's rights on a person's well-being and bodily integrity, rather than the active infliction of injury (Sciver, 2015; Bufacchi ,2005).

To an outsider, who is not familiar with the culture that in a patriarchal society like Nigeria, the female child is taught to be passive, inconspicuous, and emotionally dependent as a

child, whereas the male child is taught to be assertive as a child. Such as outsider or visitor would be taken aback when men dominate women and would point this out as an attitude that encourages gender-based violence against women. This would definitely not augur well with established norms that a man is supposed to be dominant or else he would be chastised and condemned for not acting like a 'man'.

A woman can suffer and be thrown out of her marriage for not giving birth and for not having a male child. Failure to give man a male child promotes gender-based violence. (Ayodapo et al., 2012; Oluremi et al., 2015). In Nigeria like other African countries, gender-based violence is promoted in religious teaching, for example, women are given a secondary role in Christianity, and they are expected to obey their husbands as they would God. It may be a choice between staying with a violent husband and suffering eternal damnation for breaking marriage vows if you appeal to higher loyalties.

In Africa, and Nigeria, gender-based violence is promoted through sex role socialization, such as the belief that women are incomplete without a male or that men and women are unequal (Akande, 1993). Galtung (1969) opines that, violence are in three forms. The Physical, Psychological and Structural violence. Physical violence, affects the body, and psychological violence, affects the soul includes lies, brainwashing, various forms of indoctrination, threats, and other tactics that serve to reduce mental potentialities and does not prioritize the impact of one form over the other (Sciver (2015).

In Africa and Nigeria, societal disparities in single parenting have led to women choosing to be a man's second, third, fourth, fifth, and even sixth wife. According to the findings, this strengthened male ego and dominant trait, whereas women are not allowed to have two husbands, which is a taboo in many African societies. Married men can openly have children from concubines, date other women popularly known as side-chicks, or concubines, and the patriarchal African society accepts this as normal, whereas married women cannot openly or secretly have affairs as this is deemed as a taboo. This creates gender inequality, and his gender equality can increase domestic violence against women and informs women's reluctance to leave abusive marriages.

Domestic violence is also the most common and socially condoned way in which women and girls are denied their basic rights, according to a 2007 assessment by DFID, with the most major result being fear, which hinders women's social and political engagement UNDP (1997). To put it another way, behaviors that are regarded as violating gender roles might drive violence. In Africa, gender-based violence, often known as wife battery, is considered part of the culture. Some cultural beliefs and attitudes encourage gender-based violence, such as the concept that after a woman has given birth to a man's children, she is obligated to stay with him regardless of the level of violence she faces- promoted through sex role socialization, such as the belief that women are incomplete without a male or that man and women are unequal (Akande, 1993).

Many women compete for the title of "Mrs." at the expense of their personal happiness and dignity. While Akolisa (2002) affirms that culture in Nigeria and Africa says that once a dowry is paid on a woman, she automatically becomes the husband's property and because of cultural belief and practice continue to conceal the magnitude of wife battery in Africa, a man cannot be accused of raping his own wife .Benton (1986). A woman may stay in an abusive relationship solely for financial reasons, as in the case of a full-time housewife, she may be unskilled or unemployed. Fear of hunger, fear of raising children on her own, as well as her self-esteem and confidence, may have been weakened by years of abuse. Another reason why women stay in violent relationships could be due to cultural factors (Jewkes, 2002).

Such grievous attacks on women have seen a husband used planks, to attack his wife over a mere argument. When asked why she does not want her husband arrested, she said “ He is my husband and father of my children and I don’t want him to be prosecuted. I only want the human right personnel to invite him to their office and threaten him to stop hitting me. He should be made to write an undertaking that he will never attack me again “. The woman’s head was dripping with blood down but still she does not want her husband to be arrested. Also, women who are subjected to domestic violence are also unwilling to leave their abusers for a variety of reasons.

Women who reported cases of abuse are hardly given a pat on the back for their boldness to speak up. Some of these women who are reluctant to leave her abusive spouse said while they remain married, they are negotiating to reestablish the relationship on a non-violent basis. This is however an irony as no individual would want to remain where he or she is physically or mentally assaulted (Okenwa, Lawoko, Jansson, Schmidt. & Lawrence, 1993). It is not farfetched while these women chose to remain in abusive relationships as a cultural issue also informs women to stay in violent relationships.

Socio-cultural variables such as sex role socialization, political marginalization, and a lack of economic empowerment, among others, intensify gender-based violence. They place a premium on male superiority, which has been stated, emphasized, and sanctioned by a wide range of religious, cultural, and political organizations (Izuegbu, 1987). The male child is trained to be assertive, as a child, whereas the female child is taught to be passive, inconspicuous, and emotionally dependent. Gender-based violence is also encouraged by men's dominant mindset (Bendon, 1986).

A woman may stay in an abusive relationship solely for financial reasons, according to Ilevbabor (2004), as referenced by Adewale (2007). As in the case of a full-time housewife, she may be unskilled or unemployed. Fear of hunger, fear of raising children on her own, as well as her self-esteem and confidence, may have been weakened by years of abuse. Another reason why women stay in violent relationships could be due to cultural factors. Benton (1986) noted that the victim's self-image is influenced by attitudes on sex roles, which are shaped by both culture and religion. Moreover, the poor welfare for abusive women in need of shelter and relief from abusive spouses is insufficient, and when confronted with all of these obstacles, these women prefer to return to abusive relationships.

Lack of power and finances, religious views, perseverance, and tolerance were also discovered as reasons why women are hesitant to leave violent marriages. The legal and socio-cultural systems are opposed to human rights and women's equality as human beings. To avoid stigmatization, ignorance and illiteracy, emotional attachment to spouses, fear of threat and instability, lack of power and religious pressure are all aspects to consider. According to NCADA data from 2016, 97.2 percent of women who are victims of domestic violence in Nigeria do not report it to the authorities. They suffer and die alone, believing that the law will not protect them (NCADV, 2016).

Aderinto (2001), opines that among the rural Yoruba population, there is still a preference for the education of the male child. Discrimination against women is traceable at the societal level to male authority and decision-making in the home, rigid gender roles, masculinity definitions linked to dominance or male honour, economic inequality between men and women, and the use of physical force for conflict resolution, according to cross-cultural studies. Emotional abuse, physical abuse are viewed (Odimegwu, 2001).



Women's sex role socialization which fosters and emphasizes submissiveness exacerbates violence where the political will and culture are used to promote men to top positions to the detriment of the women. The culture permits men to have many wives and this woman has to be submissive to him or be ready to be kicked out if she refuses to cooperate. In such a situation the victim of wife battering persists in the abusive situation. Due to the stigma associated with divorce, it is not always a practical option. Many women are afraid of retaliation from their spouses in the form of additional physical abuse and abandonment if they disclose relationship -violence (Knapp, 2001).

Access to productive resources such as land, credit, technical know-how, knowledge, and technology transfer is strongly influenced by gender, with men having more access to all of these resources than women. However, when the husband dies, the wife may be left without the access she had gained through her husband's clan, putting her livelihood at risk. No doubt, women's vulnerability to violence is influenced by their sexuality, as evidenced by rape or female genital mutilation (FGM), their relationship with men, and their membership in groups where violence against women is used to humiliate specific groups (e.g. mass rape in conflict situations). The ideologies of privacy and family sanctity, as well as legal rules that relate individual family or communal honor to women's sexuality, support violence against women. Government tolerance and inaction, on the other hand, are the leading causes of violence against women. (1994, UNIFEM).

According to Sciver (2015), the prevalence of domestic violence against women and the difficulty in ending it, points to the violence that occurs in inequitable societal norms and resource availability, which ultimately underpin individual occurrences and experiences. Violence occurs when an intimate partner has minimized the importance of your sex feelings, sexually criticized you, insisted on unwanted or uncomfortable touching, withheld sex and affection, forced sex after physical abuse or when you were sick raped you, assuming you would have sex with anyone, insisted that you dress in a more sexual way than you wanted (Newton, 2020).

There is stigmatization and condemnation for the woman who takes a bold step to report her abusive husband. Family members, friends and others who try to dissuade her from reporting her plight to the law enforcement agents are not in abeyance with the law. They decide to turn blind, deaf and dumb to the law until the law catches up with the violent man and this is because the law is no respecter of persons. There is no reason for you to lay your hands on your woman, it is not acceptable" Human Rights lawyer said but this fight is way beyond the rights groups and the victims of domestic violence face the impacts of staying in an abusive relationship.

The two most commonly reported psychological impacts of domestic abuse are Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and poverty, low self-esteem, mental health issue, low productivity, depression and murder and suicide (AfroNews, 2007; Siemienuk, Krentz, Gish, & Gill, 2010). Abusive men can abuse the children in front of their mother in order to cause her psychological pains. According to Akande (1993), Nigerian law enables a husband to legitimately discipline his wife. She went on to say that what constitutes acceptable chastisement is more likely to be determined by a woman's ability to tolerate horrid experiences. Women who refuse to leave violent relationships suffer from depression, withdrawal syndrome, low self-esteem, and are unpleasant.

According to Vitanza, Vogel, and Marshall (1995), PTSD symptoms include flashbacks, intrusive images, increased startle response, nightmares, and avoidance of abuse-related situations (Jewkes, 2002). These symptoms frequently remain a long time after the person is removed from the toxic environment. Arrest appeared to benefit in the short run in some situations in replication studies that were larger and more methodologically sound in both size and scope,



but those arrested experienced double the rate of violence over the course of a year. Women who have experienced domestic violence, retreat into their shells and suffer in silence while others are killed in the most gruesome manner.

### **Accounts of Ritual related crimes against women in Nigeria**

Despite the already deadly impacts of domestic violence against women enumerated above, it is worrisome that ritual related violence against women has worsened domestic violence against women. This revelation was made when it was stated that ninety-five percent of victims of ritual killings in Nigeria are women and children, this is according to Nnsini Udonta, a program officer for Project Alert, a non-governmental organization in Nigeria that advocates for women's rights. This statistic is related to women's poor standing in society and is seen as easy targets or 'things' with inherent 'enriching' value Nwakanma (Abu, 2020).

Social media use has its benefits and drawbacks, and with the rise of internet fraud known as "Yahoo, Yahoo" and perpetrators known as "Yahoo Boys," there is a sophisticated and ritualistic aspect to this crime that Nigerian media called "Yahoo Plus" and which involves the ritual killing of primarily female and the use of their body parts to help the Yahoo boys hypnotize and defraud their victims, who are primarily foreigners (Jamiu, 2021).

Following the rise in the number of women and girls killed in ritualistic ways, Nigerian social media has created hashtags for women who were killed in similar ways. These hashtags include #justiceforBamise, #justiceforUwa, #justiceforUmuoren, and #justiceforSofiat and *despite the outcry*, ritual killings have continued (Salihu, 2019; Jamiu, 2022; Obadare, 2021). The Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta revealed that between January 2018 and December 2021, 150 women and girls were killed for ritual purposes as a result of the burgeoning market for body parts in Nigeria demonstrating a growing need for security and prosperity amid a deteriorating law and order situation (Obadare, 2022; Oyewole, 2016; Peterside, 2021).

With reports of ritual related crimes appearing daily in traditional and social media, Nigeria is quickly establishing a reputation as a nation of ritualists. Jamiu (2022). For male undergraduate students, becoming rich quick with Yahoo Plus is taking on a new dimension. The police in the Kwara State Police Command discovered perverted methods used by sophisticated internet fraudsters known as Yahoo plus to snuff off their victims' chances of becoming women. ABDULWAHAB (2023). In order to replenish their fortune, these yahoo lads ritualistically hypnotise ladies called slay queens, destroying the victim's prospects of menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth in the process.

Following the recent arrest of eight people for offenses involving criminal conspiracy, alleged membership in a hidden cult, affiliation with a gang of thieves, and suspected ritualists, the police recently discovered the scam. Among the items found from them was local marijuana with mixture, natural sponges, satirical conations, and smartphones. The accused included Oni Obasanjo, Habeeb Ayomide, Mohammed Abdulkareem, Ibrahim Apete, Ajao Musa, Ismail Ayomide, Adebayo Abdulateef, and Yusuf Najeem. The above-mentioned suspects were detained on April 11, 2023, based on reliable information that several alleged ritualists were spotted congregating at a remote motel in Kwara State's Malete Moro local government area.

The Commissioner of Police sent anti-cultism officers to the location, where the suspects were picked up and all the items found on them were collected. Although they all admitted to being internet scammers but with the items found on them the police did not believe that they were just into scamming their victims on line but in order to understand why they had the items which looked fetish with them, it was pertinent for the police to conduct a proper investigation.



The CP stated in reference to one of the recovered exhibits, "This magical cake stops menstruation and pregnancy in women who eat it. The CP said the "Nature sponge" with a unique soap, stating, "Only God knows what they use to prepare the soap. It may even contain human flesh." Small pins and needles that the suspects admitted to preparing for ritual purpose especially to render women unconscious the minute they came into contact with their skin were also found in one local pot, the CP added.

He cautioned women in Ilorin and elsewhere to be on the lookout for young men flaunting illicit wealth in order to avoid becoming a victim of their schemes. "I want to caution all the girls in Kwara state and Ilorin specifically to be extremely cautious about who they follow because these male university students who are attractive and ostensibly wealthy can be quite harmful. Some of them are allegedly confederates of ritualists, armed robbers, and cultists. They use G-Wagons and other pricey cars while using iPhones costing N1.5 million to N2 million, he continued.

One Amos Olalere has described how his mother reportedly helped him kill his younger sister for ritualistic ways to get money quick. Olalere, who is reportedly 29 years old, allegedly told police officers working for the Lagos state police command that he killed his sister to increase his opportunity to con people on the Yahoo Yahoo plus website. "My mother went me to a herbalist," the young guy stated, "who informed me I will have to sacrifice one life and that person must be my sister if I want to succeed in the Yahoo business. I adore deeply. It took me months to execute the act after hearing from the herbalist. Additionally, my mother pushed me to murder my sister. "The herbalist also instructed that I must sleep with my sister, suck her vagina after she was dead, then threw her into the river for the ritual procedures to be completed." She was the one who purchased a poison, which she put in my sister's food. The suspect was detained while he was on his way to dispose of his sister's body.

In a separate situation, a man named Kingley Emobor, 18, has described how he allegedly murdered his mother and spent two days sleeping with her corpse in their leased flat in the state of Edo. "I wanted to use my mother for ritual," he declared. My age is eighteen. Long ago, my father passed away. It was one man called One Love that told me to use my mother for money ritual. He promised to give me ₦50,000 if I can kill my mother and also sleep with her then take out her private part, He said I should cut my mother's ear alongside her private part and bring it for ritual purposes. Luck ran out of the young man when his cousin noticed the absence of his mother for almost three days and decided to go into the house and search, upon searching the for her aunty he met her lying dead in one of the rooms in their apartment.

A pastor in Taraba State, Ukechukwu John Christopher was arrested by the police for killing his wife, one Victoria Christopher for money ritual purposes. He is the founder and general overseer of Omega World Global Ministries at Ikot Ataku in Takum LGA of Benue State. It was gathered that after smashing his wife's head, he secretly buried her remains in a shallow grave inside the church where he resided with his late wife and their children. His children called the attention of the neighbours when they did not see their mother which led to the pastor's arrest. Such gruesome murder of women is usually carried out for church's expansion and growth by such ritualistic fake pastors.

A lady identified as Oluwabamise Ayankole 23 was brutally murdered in a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) vehicle in Lagos, and after having body parts removed, she was thrown out of the bus in the state's Ebute Ero district, shocking Nigerians who demanded justice and the prosecution of the murderers. Bamise was killed just over a year after several adolescent boys in Abeokuta, Ogun state, beheaded Sofiat Kehinde, a 17-year-old girl, for ritualistic reasons. One Oritoke Manni, 26, who worked as a waitress at K.C. Hotel, Apakin Town, Lekki was murdered by his boyfriend Segun Titilayo, 29, of Otolu town in Lekki on November 7 2021. One Uduak





Akpan, allegedly killed 20-year-old Iniobong Umoren, a job seeker and buried her in a shallow grave in Akwa Ibom state.

In 2019, an alleged notorious ritual killer named Gracious David West admitted to killing at least 15 women for such purposes. A woman in Ogun State conspired with her husband to kill and dismember her visiting friend. Later, in the couples' chamber, the victim's bones were discovered in a bucket. After being captured by the Amotekun Corps in Ondo State, Timothy Odeniyi, allegedly acknowledged that he had previously collected human remains from cemeteries and sold them to his clients.

A reported case was a seven-year-old girl named Demilade, whose body was found at a pastor's residence in Lagos. Sources claim that Demilade was on her way to a nearby store to buy something for her mother when she was abducted and killed as part of a ritual. Moses Oko, 20, a student at the University of Jos Plateau state, killed his girlfriend Jennifer, also a student there, and took some of her body parts.

Favour Daley-Oladele, a final-year student at Lagos State University (LASU), was killed and allegedly had her heart devoured by her boyfriend, Adeeko Owolabi, 23. Segun Phillip, a self-described pastor aged 42, was detained for ordering Owolabi to allegedly ritually kill Favour Daley-Oladele. According to reports, Owolabi took Favour to a white-robed church in Ikoyi-Ile, Osun State, where he allegedly brutally killed the girl while she slept by using a mortar to crush her head before harvesting her organs. In Iwo, Osun State, a Shakirat was killed and her body was found behind her mother's store with some of her body parts gone. On December 24th, Elohor Oniorosa, 29, a hairdresser was murdered in Edo state allegedly by her boyfriend for ritual.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Three Nigerian newspapers, the Sun, the Punch, and the Vanguard, had their content analyzed between January 2019 and July 2022. Out of 1008 Punch, Vanguard, and Sun articles that were analyzed in the initial round, 32 cases involved ritual murder in the southwest states of Lagos, Ogun, and Oyo. The 32 reports were analyzed in a second round of sorting to identify the ones that emphasize female victims. Twenty four of these reports were specifically on female victims. To determine the type of relationship between the female victims and the male offenders, a third round of sorting was done where it was discovered that 70% of the female victims were known to the person who committed the crime against them.

Women are more likely than men to be victims of crimes associated to rituals, according to a fourth level of data sifting and reasons for this include women not being physically strong like the men, these women trusted their male partners and socio-cultural not to mention patriarchal belief which see women as less than men and next in line after slaves to be used for ritual purposes. Another reason for ritualistic men targeting women is the low status of women where her reproductive parts like her breast, vulva and other parts are deemed portend for get rich fast concoctions to be prepared by herbalist. Data sorted in a fifth stage further reveals that 54 men with just one woman who acted as an accomplice to her husband was involved in the ritual related killing of women. This shows that males are the ones who commit crimes against women related to rituals, therefore making it gender based violence against women.

### Numbers of victims of ritual related crime

Female: 24

Male: 4

Unidentified: 4

Total; 32

**TABLE 1: ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS**

| Newspapers/date     | Reports  | Victims | State |
|---------------------|--|---------|-------|
| Punch 14 /12/2019   | Ritual killer murders ex-girlfriend, sells body parts for N90,000                      | Female  | Ogun  |
| Punch 20/9/2020     | Police arrest man for allegedly killing poly student for ritual                        | Female  | Lagos |
| Punch 24/12/2020    | Five arrested for killing , dismembering Ogun house wife ,motorcyclist                 | Female  | Ogun  |
| Vanguard 14/9/2019  | Man rapes, kills 35-year- old woman in Ibadan  | female  | Oyo   |
| Punch 13/9/2020     | Man confesses to killing 60-year-old aunt  | Female  | Ogun  |
| Punch 16/11/2021    | Beninoise kills daughter, beheads neighbours' corpses for failed money rituals in Ogun | Female  | Ogun  |
| Punch 13/7/2022     | Child trafficker kills 71-year-old female colleague over money                         | Female  | Ogun  |
| Punch 18/6/2022     | Cleric dismembers female customer, police recover body parts                           | Female  | Oyo   |
| Punch 12/4/2022     | Lagos youth kills girlfriend , sleeps with corpse six days                             | Female  | Lagos |
| Sun 21/6/2019       | Ashes of victims head and arms mixed with alcohol to make drinker 'rich and powerful'  | Female  | Oyo   |
| Sun 27/8/2019       | Badoo boys resurfaces in Ibadan  |         |       |
| Sun 3/9/2019        | Man butchers call girl in Lagos  | Female  | Lagos |
| Vanguard 23/12/2020 | How 5 men kidnapped, chopped, bagged okadaman, passenger for money ritual              | female  | Ogun  |
| Vanguard 13/9/2020  | Alleged witchcraft : man kills aunt  | Female  | Ogun  |
| Vanguard 27/8/2020  | Herbalist asked me to escape to provide blood for spirits-Ibadan serial killer         | Female  | Oyo   |
| Punch 28/8/2019     | Panic as suspected serial killers invade Ibadan  | Female  | Oyo   |



|                    |   |        |       |
|--------------------|---|--------|-------|
| Vanguard 14/7/2020 | We kill children, sell their body parts –suspect confesses                    | Female | Oyo   |
| Sun 13/2/2022      | Police nab couple for possession of human parts in Ogun                       | Female | Ogun  |
| Sun 30/1/2022      | Ogun : 4 held for killing friend's lover for ritual                           | Female | Ogun  |
| Vanguard 24/3/2021 | Herbalist, bricklayer nabbed over killing of woman, 4-year-old son for ritual | Female | Ogun  |
| Punch 14/12/2021   | Police arrest suspected ritualists with human head                            | Female | Oyo   |
| Vanguard 3/8/2022  | Missing BRT female passenger found dead with private part removed             | Female | Lagos |
| Vanguard 2/12/2021 | 7 suspected serial ritual killers arrested in Ogun                            | Female | Ogun  |
| Vanguard 6/11/2021 | Fear grips Lagos residents as ritualists dump corpses on streets              | Female | Lagos |

**Age of offenders:** 17,19,20,20, 29, 35,28, 54,23,32,33,25,31,37,27,41,38,56,20,40.54

**Number of male suspects:** 54

**Female suspects** 1- partner to male suspect.

**Purpose of killing:** money making

**Occupation;** bricklayer, herbalist, unemployed, commercial motorcycle rider, driver, human trafficker, unknown

**Parts removed:** heart, hands, head, arm, brain, breast, vulva, intestine,

**Method of killing:** Dane gun, wooden stool, pestle, knife,

**Enticing method;** love/intimate relationship, random target.

### 1. Men are the major offenders related to ritual crimes against women.

This point clearly that ritual crimes against women is an extreme brutal form of gender-based violence against women. Table 1 shows information on the perpetrators, victims, modus operandi, age, occupation and reasons for the ritual crime. There were 55 suspects arrested out of which 54 are male while one is a female and an accomplice to her husband. Table 1 also shows that 65 reported cases of ritual crimes were identified with female victims are more and men are responsible for the ritual crime against women and girls as there was no report of a female exclusively slaying men or any other person for ritual. This makes it quite evident that the issue of gender-based violence against women is a result of power imbalances. These males include fathers, brothers, uncles, pastors, fiancés, boyfriends, coworkers, and strangers.

These men aged 20-years and above come from a variety of backgrounds and occupations. From the occupation of the suspects obtained from the Table 1, shows they are from low socio-economic background, as bricklayers, farmers, herbalist, unemployed, witchdoctors, traditionalists, friends, and sometimes even parents help them in their diabolical drive to utilize women and their body parts for ritualistic gain.

### 2. 70% of the female victims were female in domestic relationship with the male perpetrators



This shows that therefore there is trust, companionship, love and an intimate or close relationship with their killers while just 30 % were strangers to the male who ritually attacked them. A very high number 70% of the female victims are known by the males who kill them for rituals. Unlike the Bamise's case where she was a stranger to the BRT driver who is accused of allegedly killing her, other cases where men target women's parts, and the Badoo cult killings incidents indicate there is a sort of familiarity or closeness between the victims and their perpetrators, ritually killed by their boyfriends, uncles, fathers, parent's male friends whom they trusted. Some guys seduce women into marriage and romantic relationships just to murder them in the end (Ayegboyin, 2009).

### **3. Men target women for rituals in order to advance their irrational pursuits of wealth, safety.**

The men cited their desire for quick cash as one of the motives for killing the women. These males seduce women through romances and weddings before killing them or abusing them and their body parts removed if that is the focus. Sadly, it has been determined that for many women, the desire of young women to fall in love and have a successful relationship that would lead to marriage and childbearing is a death trap for many women (Berrios, 1991).

Eating the feces of the dead women and sleeping with her corpse are other ways that people seek protection and wealth without stress. According to one of the suspects in the reports, "I killed a female who was about 16 years old." I was searching for the last stool she passed before passing away. I consumed it and performed the rite using her breasts and other parts. She was unmarried. I desired success and advancement. Her other components I sold to a friend for N200, 000 so they might be used as a charm against business failure. According to the research, men who conduct ritual crimes against women are searching for a quick way to become wealthy, get promoted, acquire protection, land contracts, and move up the political ladder. All things considered, the get rich quick syndrome prevails (Goetz, 2010).

For instance, a six-man ritual killing gang that beheaded and killed their female victims was apprehended in Ogun state. They charge N1 million for each head, and less money for the tongue, ovaries, and breasts. The majority of African politics is immoral. Democratic standards are routinely violated with impunity, and the state is administered in the narrow self-interest of a few minorities. Hence, ritual is one of the means to attain and maintain a position of power in many African nations (Gbinije, 2014).

### **4. Women are easy prey for ritualists due to their low status and lack of physical strength to fight off attackers.**

Women are more susceptible to ritualists due to their stature and lack of physical power compared to males. Women are easy prey for ritualists, and even when they are not slain, the experience of being kidnapped for a ritual can cause them to become insane, impoverished, deformed, and in some cases, mobile corpses (Barnett, 2001).

According to one of the accounts, a gang member admitted as follows: "We target women who arrive for work early or stay up late. We pose as commercial bus drivers. Usually, we transport them to a temple and execute them there. The customers pay roughly N150, 000 for additional components and N1, 000,000 for one head. Women's low status in Nigeria relates to the ritual motivated crimes against them (Igwe, 2004).

When men are viewed as being superior to women, as is the case in Nigeria and other African nations, women are subjugated to patriarchal dictates. A patriarchal system places women in subordinate positions after a slave, a woman is the next target for ritual motivated gains. Odunlade Akanbi, an herbalist, claimed that ritual killing is done to enter the spiritual realm and ask for things that regular prayers cannot. He continued by saying that women and slaves are the



next victims after animal sacrifice fails to placate deities in patriarchal Africa society (Owoeye, 2000).

## **CONCLUSION**

This study has so far identified ritual crime against women as a type of gender-based violence against women. Men have preyed on women for their body parts for evil purposes, using them in ritualistic concoctions to make quick money in African societies beset by poverty, bad orientation, and the low status of women as a result of patriarchy. According to the study, women have become victims not only at home but also while looking for love, employment, and unrelated strangers to their male protagonists. These women were abused and brutally murdered by men they trusted because of the men's questionable pursuit of quick money. The tragic outcomes of these ladies have demonstrated how desperate attempts to obtain money through quick ritualistic means have worsened domestic violence against women in Nigeria.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The authorities must approach crimes involving rituals via a gendered prism. This will enable anyone proposing remedies to the crime to do so from a knowledgeable, thoroughly researched perspective that will approach the issue as a form of violence targeting women. Women should no longer be subjected to cultural and customary practices that devalue them and place them in subordinate roles in families and societies. Society must be educated about the value of lives, gender equality, and the necessity to eschew all dubious methods of escaping poverty, especially those that involve killing someone ritualistically.

Government should encourage and support entrepreneurs with beginning cash and the tenacity to stay in company through difficult times, as well as significant job possibilities. Promoting and rewarding morality and values while discouraging vices, ungodly wealth, and quick riches are necessary. By rejecting their wealth and reporting them to law enforcement for arrest and punishment, society should likewise criticize those whose sources of income cannot be proven and stop praising the "get rich quick" mindset.





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