

**Title:** A quantitative assessment of the perceptions of Nigerian men on domestic violence in the 2008 Nigerian Demographic and Health Survey

**Authors:** FADEYIBI Opeyemi Abiola, BAMIWUYE Olusina, ADEDINI Sunday and OMOYENI Sunday

## **Introduction**

The United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) noted that although earlier International Treaties recognized the equality between men and women, women are daily subjects of human right violations for the mere fact that they are females. Since the endorsement of the CEDAW document by 140 countries, different regions and countries of the world have taken steps to ensure that the rights of girls and women are adequately protected and provided for. The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights addressed the issue of violence against women in Africa by urging member states to ensure the elimination of all discrimination against women and to protect the rights of women.

In Nigeria, gender-based violence has been listed as part of several policy documents to ensure that the various forms of the act and issues related to them are properly addressed. However, studies have established that violence against women is still widespread in different parts of the country, and that women who are the main victims of these acts of violence are still helpless. For example, Okemgbo, Omideyi and Odimegwu (2002) in a study among Igbo women in Imo state of Nigeria found that about 4 in 5 women in their sample have ever been battered by their male counterparts. A stunningly high percentage (59%) of the women included in the study was found to have been battered even during pregnancy. Ilika (2005) also found that women in a rural Igbo community of Anambra state are complacent with the practise perceiving it as a norm and consider reporting cases of violence to the police as an act that should be reprimanded. While most of the studies on gender-based violence in Nigeria have focused on domestic or intimate partner violence, identifying the patterns, causes and consequences of the act, relatively few studies have paid attention to assessing the perception of women who are usually the victims of these acts of violence. Worse still, men who are the main perpetrators of gender-based violence are hardly included in studies of gender-based violence. Involving men in GBV studies is important because men are pivotal to any programme to reduce domestic violence and ensure effective societal change in this direction. This paper assesses the perception of Nigerian men on domestic violence especially wife battery with a view to identifying groups of men that needs to be specially targeted in programmes aimed at eliminating the practise.

## **Data**

The paper analyzed data from the 2008 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey. The DHS model questionnaire for men contained 7 questions to which respondents were asked to state in their own opinion whether or not a man is justified in hitting or beating his wife. The questions include:

1. If she goes out without telling him
2. If she neglects the children
3. If she argues with him
4. If she refuses to have sex with him
5. If she burns food
6. If she does not cook on time
7. If she refuses to have more children

The DHS dataset for men however contained responses to only 5 of these questions which were used as measures of the perception of men on domestic violence. These questions have been used in a previous study by Oyediran and Isiugo-Abanihe (2005) to assess the perception of women on domestic violence. A total of 15,486 men comprising 6,427 never married men and 9,056 ever married men who took part in the DHS survey answered these questions. However, the analysis included only those who opined that a man is justified in hitting or beating his wife for any of the reasons listed in the dataset. Hence, the total number of men included in analysis was 4,927 men (2,167 never married and 2,760 ever married men). This was done with a view to identifying the factors that can explain the perception of men towards wife battery or other forms of physical violence.

The analysis was done using both bivariate and multivariate techniques. Independent variables considered in the analysis include age, region and place of residence, number of partners (for those who have ever been married), highest level of education, religion, wealth index and media exposure. The outcome variable in the analysis was whether or not a man is justified in hitting or beating his wife. This was dichotomized as 1 if a man agrees to the statement and 0 otherwise for inclusion in the logistic regression model.

## **Results**

The distribution of respondents by their background characteristics show that 37% of the men were below 24 years, almost half were aged 25-44 years (47.7%) while the older men (45 years and above) account for only 15.4% of the sample. More than half of the respondents were either currently or previously married (56%), and among those who are currently married, 78% have only one wife/partner.

With regards to educational attainment, most of the respondents who had attended school attained secondary education (43.2%) while those with primary education were only 23.4%. About one quarter of the men included in the sample had no education at all. Half of the respondents are Christians (Catholic and other Christians) while Moslems constitute 47.6%. The remaining 2.7% are traditionalists and other religions.

The distribution of respondents by place and type of residence show that majority of the respondents reside in rural areas (73.4%). Three in five respondents come from the Northern part of the country - 19.1% from the North central, 23.4% from the North East and 17.9% from the North West. The remaining two-fifths of the respondents span across the Southern region -12.1% from the South East, 15.7% from the South South and 11.8% from the South West. The distribution of respondents by region of residence reflects the disparity in level of education across the different regions of the country.

Exposure to mass media is very important in assessing perceptions of people about any issue. It suggests the best possible means of reaching target populations with information, education and communication programmes aimed at achieving certain behavioural changes in the society. In this study, frequency of reading newspaper is quite low when compared with listening to the radio or watching the television. Three-fifths of the men included in the sample indicated that they do not read the newspaper at all while only 15.8% and 43.8% do not listen to the radio or watch television respectively. More than half of the respondents listen to the radio everyday while one-fifth indicate that they watch television everyday.

Analysis of the perception of men on gender-based violence show that one-third of all the men agreed that a man is justified in hitting or beating his wife for any of the reasons stated in the DHS. About two-thirds of the men agreed that a man is justified in hitting or beating his wife if she goes out without telling him or if she neglects the children. More than half of the men supported wife battery if a woman argues with her husband (55.4%), two-fifths if a woman refuses to have sex with her husband and 31.2% if she burns the food. At the multivariate level, logistic regression models were used to identify the predictors of the outcome variable. Results of the logistic regression show that age, level of education, type of union, region and place of residence and wealth index were significantly associated with the perception that wife battery is justified ( $p < 0.05$ ).

## **Conclusion**

This paper assesses the perception of men on domestic violence with a view to identifying groups of men that needs to be specially targeted in programmes aimed at eliminating the practise. Concerted efforts at eliminating the practice including information, education and communication programmes may need to involve men who are usually the perpetrators of the act.