DOMESTIC AND MARITAL VIOLENCE AMONG THREE ETHNIC GROUPS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

There is evidence that between half and two-thirds of Nigerian women have experienced domestic violence and that this appears to be higher in some ethnic groups than others. Yet studies that examine the ethnic dimensions of domestic and marital violence are conspicuously missing in the literature. We fill this void using data from the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey. Results indicate significant ethnic differences with Igbo women more likely to have experienced physical, sexual and emotional violence compared to Yoruba women. Hausa women were however significantly less likely to experience physical and sexual violence but not emotional violence, compared to Yoruba women. Igbo and Hausa women with domineering husbands were significantly more likely to experience physical and sexual violence, compared to Yoruba women with such husbands. Also, Igbo and Hausa women who thought wife-beating was justified were more likely to experience marital violence, compared to Yoruba women.

Keywords: Nigeria, women, domestic and marital violence, culture, ethnicity

Introduction

Globally, violence against women in the domestic and marital context is pervasive, and may occur in various cultures, irrespective of women's social, economic, religious, ethnic, or racial background (see Kimmel, 2002; Jewkes, 2002; Kishor and Johnson, 2004; McCloskey, et al., 2005; Andersson, et al., 2007). Notwithstanding, domestic violence remains underreported due to its sensitive nature, and the most documented forms include psychological violence, physical violence, and sexual assault (WHO, 2012). Of utmost concern however, is that domestic and marital violence are associated with physical, mental, and reproductive health challenges that affect the lives of many women (Campbell, 2002; Coker, et al., 2002; Ellsberg, et al., 2008; Emenike, et al., 2008; Howard, et al., 2010), in addition to the fact that its perpetration threatens women's societal freedom, dignity, and infringes on their fundamental human rights (Bograd, 1999; Sokoloff and Dupont, 2005; McCloskey, et al., 2005; Price, 2005). It is estimated that one-third of women worldwide are at risk of experiencing physical and/or sexual coercion and rape from a male domestic partner (WHO, 2013). A comparative study also shows that the proportion of ever-married women who had ever encountered physical assault by a male intimate partner ranged from 13 per cent in Japan to 61 per cent in Peru (Garcia-Moreno, 2005).

As indicated elsewhere, Nigeria is among one of the countries recording high incidence of female domestic abuse in sub-Sahara Africa, where two-thirds of women are found to be suffering male partner violence (Amnesty International, 2012). As in most African societies, the context of female domestic abuse in Nigeria is defined by women's societal relations with men. Women are traditionally obliged to surrender their entirety to their husbands, in addition to being domestically available to gratify male partner's psychological, physical and sexual desires. Thus, women's transgressions of these expected roles lead to their beating, and coercion, in an attempt to restore traditional gender order and male power (Ofei-Aboagye, 1994; Amoakohene, 2004;

Okenwa, Lawoko and Jansson, 2009; Tenkorang and Owusu, 2013; Tenkorang, et al., 2013.). In most Nigerian communities, the domestic abuse of a female partner is widely acceptable and justified, it is therefore unquestioned and naturalized. For instance, the Tiv-speaking people of Nigeria believe that wife beating is a sign of affection, and women have been socialised to accept and sometimes encourage its presence (Odimegwu, 2001). This belief is also made evident in Oyediran and Isiugo-Abanihe's (2005) study that found that more than half of ever-married women accepted and justified wife beating and hitting as a necessary male 'duty' in order to assert manhood within the traditional family.

However, because Nigeria is made up of diverse ethnic groups (374 ethnic groups) that occupy 36 different states or provinces, cultural and gender norms differ, and traditional attitudes towards domestic violence are diverse (see Oladepo and Arulogun, 2011; Linos, et al., 2013). For example, the Igbos, occupying the Imo state, of southeastern Nigeria are found to be highly male-centered, and traditional titles, lands, wealth, and decision-making is a major part of male privilege. These societal privileges are handed down from males to males of younger generations, and women are entirely excluded (Okemgbo, et al, 2002; Okeke and Agu, 2012; Umeora, et al, 2008). As far as cultural norms are concerned, womanhood among the Igbos is highly denigrated to humility, passivity, submission, and inferiority, and traditional norms encourage male domination and power which could be expressed through violence, in order to sustain the expected gender order (Okemgbo, et al, 2002). The cultural dynamic in Igbo communities have been related to a high incidence of domestic violence where a percentage of 78.8 is noted (Obi and Ozumba, 2007). The Hausas, however, predominantly occupy Northern Nigeria and they are known to practise the Sharia or Islamic law, and lower levels of female domestic abuse have been noted, compared with ethnic groups such as the Igbos and the Yoruba

who occupy southern Nigeria (Linos, et al., 2013). Moreover, the higher prevalence of domestic violence against women has been reported among the Yorubas in Southwestern Nigeria by Odunjirin (1993). Considering the heterogeneity of the Nigerian population with regards to ethnic groupings, we attempt to further explore domestic and marital violence among selected ethnic groups, specifically, Yoruba and Hausa as well as the Igbos, using a population-based data from the 2008 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS). Thus, this paper contributes to further understanding the issue of domestic violence among different ethnic groups in Nigeria, which could be useful to policy-makers who aim to enhance strategies that target and address domestic violence based on prevalence, and among high risk groups in Nigeria. This is against the backdrop that Nigeria is yet to demonstrate their commitment to the United Nation's Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) through legislation.

Theoretical perspectives on Domestic and Marital violence

Among many existing theoretical explanations for domestic and marital violence, the most evolved, and frequently referenced include *feminist* theories, *cultural theories*, and *life course theories*. These theories give both contextual and individual-level explanations for domestic violence, thus linking violence in the family to the broader society.

Feminist theories explain domestic violence in relation to gender and power relations in society, including the role of the patriarchy in enacting and perpetuating female domestic abuse. Feminist scholars insist that domestic violence is sexed (Anderson, 1997, 2009, 2013; see also, Kimmel, 2011; Kimmel and Aronson, 2008), thus a means through which sexed exploitation and inequality are staged, where society places emphasis on continual female denigration and

inferiority, but male superiority (D'cruze and Rao, 2005). Society prizes normative masculinity, and normative femininity, particularly highlighting a man's ability to exhibit power: a system of male authority, male rule, male-domination and control (Anderson and Umberson, 2001; Williamson, 2010; Dragiewcz and DeKeseredy, 2012; Johnson and Ferraro, 2000; MacKinnon, 2006; Hearn, 2012; Kimmel, 2002). Price (2005) considers specific socio-cultural ideas about societal construction of being a proper man or woman and suggests that the difference in the ways that men and women are constructed in diverse cultures perpetuates the systemic abuse of women. Particularly in African cultures, including the Nigerian culture, gender roles are clearly defined, and male domination and control is maintained and exercised through, for example, traditional values, beliefs, and customs (Ofei Aboagye, 1994; Koenig, et al., 2003; Uthman, et al., 2009; Dunkle, et al., 2004). Women's experiences within the domestic sphere are shaped by sociocultural expectations of normative femininity such as passivity and submission, whereas it is expected that men exhibit normative masculinity such as aggression and domination, and traditional norms recognize men as domestic heads and breadwinners, and women as procreators and domestic caretakers (see King, 2006; Karim, 2011). According to Illika (2005), among the Igbo ethnic group in Nigeria, the total submission of women to men in marital relationships is enforced during the performance of marriage rituals or rites. A woman belonging to the Igbo ethnic group does signify the acceptance of marriage, in addition to her total submission to the man by kneeling before her prospective husband, and offering a cup of palm wine to him after sipping some from the same cup herself. Counter to some ethnic groups such as the Hausas, Igbo marriage is elaborate, and a man pays a 'fat' bride price or dowry, including stipulated 'head drinks,' and other items the kindred of the woman may demand. Because male entitlement, power, and superiority, compared to female submission is conveyed during the performance of

marriage rituals, the place of female marital abuse can be noted when there is a transgression of the female subordinate role.

Another theoretical conceptualization that shares similar concerns with feminist perspectives on domestic violence is the cultural theory. Proponents of cultural model link domestic violence to pluralistic norms, traditions, and customs of the society, particularly emphasizing the role of societal norms and customs in enacting enabling conditions for domestic abuse (Perilla, et al., 1994; Leonard and Senchak 1996; Jewkes, et al., 2002; Okwenwa, et al., 2009). Norms and traditions are society specific (Fischbach and Herbert, 1997; Dhruvarajan and Vickers, 2002), and in the sub-Saharan African region, norms emphasize unequal socialization of men and women, and married women are socially expected to submit to the 'authority' of their husbands (Bowman, 2003, 2003; Amoakohene, 2004; Okulate, 2005; Mann and Takyi, 2009; Illyasu, 2013). Individuals are socialized, for example through folklores and storytelling, to accept and justify male control and abuse (King, 2006, Ofei-Aboagye, 1994), and to believe that violence in marital relationships is a private matter between couples, and victims are blamed for reporting (Illika, et al., 2002; Cantalupo, et al., 2006; Karim, 2011). A recent study in the capital city of Nigeria, Abuja, demonstrates that the majority of women (29.7%) kept their domestic abuse 'private' for fear of social stigmatization and blaming (Efetie and Salami, 2007). Despite the finding that many cases of domestic abuse go unreported in Nigeria (like it is elsewhere, for instance, in USA, see Kimmel, 2002), 28 per cent of domestic violence prevalence is reported in northern Nigeria, among the Hausas (Ameh and Abdul, 2004), and the Igbos in southern Nigeria are by far in the highest risk group for domestic violence (Obi and Ozumba, 2007). Given the disparity of prevalence among ethnic groups in a single federal country, exploring cultural norms

in the perpetuation of domestic violence could throw more light towards the understanding of domestic violence among the Igbos, Hausas and Yorubas in Nigeria.

Moreover, the Life course theory attempts to link marital violence with past experiences of family abuse during an early life (Riggs & O'Leary, 1996; Dutton, 1995; Holtzworth-Munroe, et al., 2000; Strauss, 2005; Solinas-Saunders, 2007). Proponents of life course theory suggest that interpersonal violence is a behavioural trait among a given population (Gerwitz and Edleson, 2007; Holt et al. 2008), and some intimate couples learn to use violence to resolve disputes during stressful situations such as financial problems, and during times of substance abuse (Riggs, Caulfield, & Street, 2000; Lewis & Fremouw, 2001; Gass, Stein & Williams, 2011). In some African societies (For example, Ghana), an individual's risk for domestic violence has been associated with childhood experiences of family abuse, meanwhile, family violence differ along ethnic lines (Tenkorang and Owusu, 2013). Likewise, the Igbos, Hausas and Yorubas are different ethnic groups in Nigeria, reporting diverse prevalence of domestic violence. It could therefore be suggested that childhood experiences of domestic violence will be different among these ethnic groups.

Data and Methods

The data used for this research was obtained from the 2008 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS, 2008), as implemented by the National Population Commission (NPC) from June 2008 to October 2008. The NDHS used a multi-stage sampling technique where 36,800 households were first selected from Enumeration Areas (EAs) using probability sampling proportional to size and 33, 385 female respondents aged 15-49 years selected from households.

The 2008 NDHS is a continuation and an updated version of the 1990, 1999, and 2003 NDHS surveys as it evaluates Nigeria's recent basic demographic and health indicators covered in the earlier surveys. Some of the major objectives of the 2008 NDHS were to provide updated information on people's sexual activity, awareness level and behavior regarding HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, domestic violence and female genital mutilation (NDHS, 2008). The domestic violence module of the DHS is a recent addition and a special module designed to obtain data on the prevalence of violence against women in Nigeria (NDHS, 2008). The module was administered to one eligible woman randomly selected in each household (NDHS, 2008). Information was collected on several dimensions of violence including physical, sexual and emotional violence. High ethical standards were observed given the sensitive nature of the subject. For instance, interviewers received special training on gender-based violence especially as collection of such data required that interviewers have strong rapport with respondents. Also, to ensure the safety and confidentiality of the answers provided by respondents, interviewers were instructed only to interview when maximum privacy was guaranteed. As an additional security measure, only one woman per household was interviewed for questions related to domestic violence. This paper focuses on 9759 married women who responded to questions physical, sexual and emotional violence.

Measures:

Three main variables that capture different dimensions of domestic and marital violence are employed. These include, *Physical*, *sexual* and *emotional* violence. Physical violence was created from 6 questions that asked women if their spouses ever punched shook or threw something at them; *if their spouses ever slapped them; punched with fist or something harmful; ever kicked or dragged them; ever tried to strangle or burn; threatened with gun/knife or other*

weapon; ever twisted arm or pull hair. These variables were coded as 'yes=1' when respondents answered in the affirmative to the above questions and 'no=0' when they indicate otherwise. Thus, all women who answered 'yes' on at least one of these questions were coded as having experienced physical violence, while those who answered 'no' on all six indicators were coded as having experienced no physical violence. Sexual violence was created from two main questions that asked women *if their spouses ever physically forced sex on them, and if their spouses ever forced any other sexual acts when not wanted*. Women who answered 'yes' on at least one of these questions were coded as having experienced sexual violence. Otherwise, they were coded as 'not experienced sexual violence'. Emotional violence was created from three questions that asked *if women ever got threatened of harm by their spouses, got humiliated by their spouses, ever insulted or made to feel bad*. Women who answered 'yes' on at least one of these questions were coded as having experienced emotional violence, otherwise they were coded as 'not experienced emotional violence;.

Independent variables were categorized to capture feminist, cultural and life course epistemologies of domestic and marital violence. For instance, socio-economic variables such as education (no=0, primary education=1, secondary education=2 and higher education=3), employment status (not employed=0 and employed=1) and wealth status (poorest=0, poorer=1, middle=2, richer=3 and richest=4) that border on feminist interpretation of women's dependence on men were introduced. Variables that tap cultural models of marital violence include our focal independent variable, *ethnicity* (dummy coded as Yoruba=0, Igbo=1 and Hausa=2). Others include *justification of wife-beating*, a scale created using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) from a series of questions that asked women whether wife-beating is justified if: *if they go out without telling their husbands, neglects the children, argue with their husbands, refuses to have*

sex with their husbands, and burns the food. Reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) for this scale is 0.880. Positive values on the scale indicate higher levels of justification for wife-beating, while negative values indicate otherwise. *Husband's control and domineering attitudes* was also created using PCA from questions that asked women if: *their husbands get jealous on seeing them talk with other men, husband accuses respondents of unfaithfulness, husband does not permit wife to meet her girlfriends, husband tries to limit respondent's contact with family, husband insists on knowing where respondent is, husband doesn't trust respondent with money.* Reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) is 0.705. Positive values on the scale indicate higher levels of control by husbands of respondents, while negative values indicate lower levels of control.

Life course or *family violence* variables were captured with two main indicators. The first and most important is a scale derived from 3 questions that asked women if they were ever *physically hurt by their father, ever physically hurt by their mother,* and ever physically hurt by a brother/sister. Reliability coefficient for the scale (Cronbach's Alpha) was estimated as 0.676. Positive values on the scale indicate respondents experienced higher levels of family violence, while negative values indicate lower levels of family violence. The other variable measured if respondent's husband drinks alcohol also coded (no=0, yes=1). Age and rural/urban residence are used as control variables. Region of residence and religion are not controlled because they overlap with ethnicity. While Hausas are predominantly Muslims, Igbos and Yoruba's are largely Christians. Also, the majority of Igbos live in South Eastern Nigeria compared to Yorubas and Hausas who are found in South Western and Northern regions respectively.

Data Analysis

All three outcome variables used for analyses are dichotomous, but as shown in Table 1, the cases are unevenly distributed meaning that using a probit or logit link function that assumes a symmetrical distribution could produce biased parameter estimates (Tenkorang & Owusu, 2010; Gyimah et al. 2010). Thus, a complementary log-log model that is suited for asymmetrical distributions is employed. However, the standard complementary log-log models are built on the assumption of independence of observations but the GDHS has a hierarchical structure with participants nested within survey clusters, which could potentially bias the standard errors. STATA 12.SE which provides an outlet for handling this problem is used by imposing on our models a 'cluster' variable, usually the identification numbers of respondents at the cluster level. This in turn adjusts the standard errors producing statistically robust parameter estimates (Cleves et al. 2004; Tenkorang and Owusu, 2010). Univariate, bivariate and several multivariate models were computed. The multivariate models are sequential such that the first model includes ethnicity and the other cultural variables (justification of wife-beating and husbands control and domineering attitude); the second model added socio-economic predictors that tap feminist interpretations of domestic and marital violence; the third model includes life course and family violence variables and the fourth includes interaction terms mainly between ethnicity, justification for wife-beating and husband's control and domineering attitudes.

Results

Table 1 presents a univariate distribution of selected dependent and independent variables by ethnicity. Results indicate ethnic differences regarding domestic and marital violence against women in Nigeria. For instance, it is clear that Igbo women experience higher levels of physical, sexual and emotional violence compared to the two other ethnic groups. While Yoruba women experienced higher physical violence, compared to the Hausas, the latter reported higher sexual

and emotional violence compared to the former. Also, significant socio-economic differences are observed among women from the different ethnic categorizations. For instance, compared to Igbo and Yoruba women, majority of Hausa women are uneducated, belong to the poorest wealth quintile and are unemployed. Both Yoruba and Igbo women scored less on the wife-beating scale, compared to Hausa women indicating that they do not justify wife-beating as is the case among the Hausa women. Igbo women reported higher levels of control by their husbands compared to both Yoruba and Hausa women. Yoruba women reported higher levels of family violence, but it was the Hausa women who reported the least of such violence. It is not very surprising that the majority of Hausa women indicated that their husbands do not drink alcohol as this is prohibited by the Islamic religion. The data also show that Hausa women in the sample are relatively younger and majority live in the rural areas, compared to Igbo and Yoruba women.

Table 2 presents bivariate associations of the various measures of violence and selected independent variables. Ethnicity, our focal independent variable was significantly associated with physical, sexual and emotional violence. Compared to Yoruba women, Igbo women are significantly more likely to experience all three measures of violence. On the contrary, Hausa women were less likely to experience physical violence but more likely to report emotional violence compared to Yoruba women. Also, women who justified wife-beating and those who indicated higher control and domineering attitudes by husbands were significantly more likely to experience physical, sexual and emotional violence. Life course variables are significantly associated with domestic and marital violence. Women who experienced family violence while growing up were more likely to report physical and sexual violence, but not emotional violence. We find however, that compared to women who did not, women who indicated their husbands drank alcohol experienced all three types of violence. Socio-economic predictors that tap

women's dependence on men indicates that compared to the unemployed, those employed are more likely to experience both physical and emotional violence. Compared with the uneducated, women with primary and secondary education are more likely to experience physical violence. Similarly, wealthier women reported higher levels of physical violence compared to poorer women. Interestingly, higher education and wealth protected women against emotional violence.

Multivariate results are presented in Tables 3 through 5. Separate multivariate models are built for physical, sexual and emotional violence. Ethnicity appears to be a robust predictor of all three types of violence. Consistent with the bivariate findings, we find that Igbo women compared with their Yoruba counterparts are more likely to experience physical violence. The effects vanish however when family violence is controlled in the third model. Similarly, Igbo women were more likely to experience both sexual and emotional violence. Women who justified wife-beating and reported higher levels of control and domineering attitudes by their husbands were all significantly more likely to have experienced all three types of violence. Similar effects are observed for life course variables as women with prior experience of family violence and those with husbands who drink alcohol experienced all three forms of violence. Socio-economic differences are observed for physical and emotional violence. Employed women experienced physical and emotional violence, compared to the unemployed. On the contrary, educated women were less likely to experience such violence compared to the uneducated. Interaction terms introduced in models 4 of tables 3 through 5 suggest that Yoruba and Hausa women who indicated having domineering husbands were significantly less likely to experience all three forms of violence, compared to Igbo women with domineering husbands. It is also observed that when interactions terms are controlled the Igbos (main effects) now become significantly less likely to experience both sexual and emotional violence, compared to the

Hausas. Further analysis showed that it is the interactions between ethnicity and husband's domineering attitudes that suppressed the main effects of ethnicity, specifically the Igbos. This finding could mean that for Igbo women much of the violence may be due to their husband's controlling attitudes to the extent that when controlled this disadvantage is suppressed.

Discussion

Domestic and marital violence is highly prevalent in sub-Sahara Africa, and Nigeria is no exception. Anecdotal evidence show that such violence differ among the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, yet previous studies that examined marital violence in Nigeria rarely examined the role of ethnicity in perpetuating such violence. More importantly, it is unclear how the different cultural norms associated with these ethnic groupings influence domestic and marital violence against women. We fill this important research gap. Consistent with our theoretical expectations, marital violence, both physical and sexual, was higher among Igbos compared to both Hausa and Yoruba women. This is supported by multivariate findings that indicate that Igbo women were more likely to report marital violence compared to Yoruba women. It is noteworthy however that it is probably the Igbo women whose husbands are controlling who face the highest risk of experiencing such violence as evinced in our models with interaction terms.

The prevalence of marital violence among the Igbos has often been linked to the higher levels of patriarchy demonstrated through gender norms and how women are treated in Igbo culture. Such norms mostly become evident in traditional Igbo marriages where family members often demand for the father of the bride or a male relative from the paternal side before the marriage rites can be performed sometimes to the exclusion of the mother of the bride (Illika, 2005). A major point of reference is the payment of expensive bride's wealth by the family of the

groom to that of the bride, an important part of Igbo marriage rites that is blamed for delays in marriage for women and frustration for men. The payment of such exorbitant bride's wealth has not only been criticised as undermining its original significance, but also promoted violence against women as it symbolizes 'loss of rights' by the bride's family and 'transfer of rights' to the groom. Thus, the prevalent report by Igbo women that their husbands are controlling and domineering may just be a reflection of the gender hierarchy where men are considered superior than women. While interesting it must be argued that the finding that physical and sexual violence was lower among the Hausa was intriguing especially against the backdrop that the Hausas are stereotyped as 'violent', and that forced marriages and female seclusion (Purdah) are quite common amongst them (Iliyasu et al. 2011). Results from this study confirm Hausa women reporting wife-beating as justified compared to women from the other ethnic groups. This is consistent with findings released by the Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition that reported the legalization of 'corrective beating' of women and children of the North (where Hausas mostly reside) as justified so far as it does not hurt (British Council Nigeria, 2012). It is argued here that the internalization of such violence as the norm by women, mostly Hausa women could certainly affect report rates and may explain the low levels of physical and sexual violence among Hausa women. This is even more so where majority of Hausa women are the least empowered (poor, uneducated and unemployed) compared to women from the other ethnic groups. Results indicating that women with domineering husbands, and those justifying wife-beating are more likely to experience all three forms violence are consistent with others elsewhere (see Tenkorang et al. 2013). They support the assumptions underlying cultural models of violence that refer to existing norms and traditional gender roles as platforms for perpetrating violence against women. Amoakohene (2004) argued for instance, that African culture including what is observed in

Nigeria requires that women be submissive, respectful, dutiful and serviceable to their husbands to the extent that challenging abuse may be interpreted as an attempt to undermine or subvert the traditional authority or superiority of the man. Thus, results that wife's report of husband's controlling and domineering attitudes lead to physical, sexual and emotional violence demonstrates how such power imbalances characterizing marital relationships could trigger violence against women (Tenkorang et al. 2013). Also, wife-beating although detrimental to the health and well-being of women is often interpreted as a demonstration of a husband's authority and love for his wife (Jejeebhoy 1998) to the extent that women internalize such norms and create conditions that attract violent acts.

Feminist interpretations of marital violence often refer to female dependence and disempowerment as the driving force behind such violence. Socio-economic variables that capture feminist epistemologies are significantly related to both physical and emotional violence, but not sexual violence. The finding that educated women experience less physical and emotional violence and that the wealthy are also less likely to experience emotional abuse are consistent with others elsewhere that posit that educated women possess the life skills to bargain and avoid conflicts within the domestic setting (Tenkorang et al. 2013). Wealthy women on the other hand may have enough economic leverage and clout that attracts respect and equal treatment from male partners. However, the finding that working women experienced more violence than non-working women sounds counter-intuitive as it challenges feminist assumptions of economic dependence of women on men. We however suspect that the violence may rather result from tensions that build between working women and their partners as such women may not always be available for their male partners as is the case for housewives who may be always available to fulfil their domestic duties.

The impact of family violence experienced earlier in the life course on marital violence is also made evident. The finding is thus consistent with the assumptions of the life course perspective that suggests that violence experienced earlier in the life course may have repercussions in later life. While the cross-sectional nature of the data makes it difficult to draw causal links between family violence earlier in the life course and marital violence in subsequent years, it is observed in other studies that individuals exposed to family violence earlier maintain and replicate patterns of such violence and abuse in later years (Giles-Sims 1985; Tenkorang et al. 2013). Thus, the findings corroborate others that observe that it is possible that women who witnessed family violence may have learned and imported violent attitudes into their marital unions attracting similar violent reactions from their partners (Tenkorang et al. 2013). The strong relationship between husband's alcohol use and violence is also supported by studies elsewhere (Oladepo et al. 2011; Tenkorang et al. 2013; Kiss et al.2012; Berg et al. 2010; Pandey et al. 2009; Soler et al. 2000). This is not very surprising as alcohol use has been linked to aggressive and violent behaviors (Angelucci 2008).

Several policy implications emerge from the findings of this study. It is very clear that significant differences exist among ethnic groups regarding violence and the socio-cultural factors that underpin such violence. This means policy makers need to target women belonging to different ethnic groups with specific interventions. For instance, while all Nigerian women need to be empowered, especially as it has the potential of enhancing their independence and assertiveness, the analysis showed that it is Hausa women who may benefit immensely from such empowerment. Providing Nigerian women with such opportunities could help in correcting the power imbalances that characterize marital unions and dealing with the cultural barriers that constrain women's ability to seek equality in their relationships.

Despite the interesting findings, there are some limitations worth acknowledging. The use of cross-sectional data means we are unable to draw causal connections between independent and dependent variables. Concerns have also been raised about the reliability of surveys based on self-reports especially when they border on sensitive issues like violence within marriages. It is thus possible that physical, sexual and emotional violence will be under-reported especially among married couples given the stigma and other related consequences attached to reporting such incidence in most African societies. Notwithstanding, including a module on marital violence, and the circumstances surrounding such incidence is useful given the general lack of large scale quantitative studies on this subject.

Table 1: Univariate distribution of selected dependent and independent variables

Variables	Igbo (N=2118)	Yoruba (N=2719)	Hausa (N=4922)
Physical violence			
No	81.8	87.3	94.3
Yes	18.2	12.7	5.7
Sexual violence			
No	95.5	98.6	98.0
Yes	4.5	1.4	2.0
Emotional violence			
No	75.0	89.9	77.1
Yes	25.0	10.1	22.9
Socio-economic variables			
Education Background			
No Education	10.3	14.3	82.2
Primary Education	31.7	26.8	11.3
Secondary Education	43.2	42.3	5.4
Higher Education	14.8	16.6	1.1
Wealth Status			
Poorest	6.2	3.3	32.8
Poorer	10.9	11.3	33.4
Middle	22.2	14.8	18.2
Richer	27.8	29.1	10.4
Richest	32.8	41.5	5.2
Employment status			
No	21.2	10.5	49.5
Yes	78.8	89.5	50.5
Socio-cultural variables			
Justification for wifebeating	-.126	-.320	.257
Husband Controls wife	.019	-073	-.093
Life course variables			
Family violence	-.038	.118	-.173
Husband drinks alcohol			
No	58.3	84.3	99.3
Yes	41.7	15.7	.70
Control variables			
Age of respondents	33.3	32.9	29.0
Residence			
Urban	46.7	55.6	21.7
Rural	53.3	44.4	78.3

Table 2: Bivariate models of physical, sexual and emotional violence against Nigerian women

Socio-economic variables	**Physical**	**Sexual**	**Emotional**
Education Background			
No Education	1.00	1.00	1.00
Primary Education	2.30 (.095)***	1.39 (.168)**	1.01 (.069)
Secondary Education	2.15 (.098)***	1.05 (.184)	.781 (.078)***
Higher Education	.989 (.164)	.592 (.387)	.531 (.125)***
Wealth Status			
Poorest	1.00	1.00	1.00
Poorer	1.05 (.129)	1.38 (.206)	.960 (.076)
Middle	1.73 (.136)***	1.70 (.228)**	.948 (.098)
Richer	1.69 (.134)***	1.10 (.242)	.745 (.106)***
Richest	1.50 (.131)***	.787 (.186)	.596 (.109)***
Employment status			
No	1.00	1.00	1.00
Yes	1.73 (.084)***	1.12 (.158)	1.21 (.062)***
Socio-cultural variables			
Ethnicity			
Yoruba	1.00	1.00	1.00
Igbo	1.53 (.085)***	3.22 (.230)***	2.70 (.088)***
Hausa	.432 (.109)***	1.37 (.236)	2.43 (.089)***
Justification for wifebeating	1.18 (.033)***	1.45 (.066)***	1.28 (.030)***
Husband Controls wife	1.72 (.029)***	2.03 (.049)***	1.54 (.027)***
Life course variables			
Family violence	1.21 (.029)***	1.12 (.057)**	1.04 (.031)
Husband drinks alcohol			
No	1.00	1.00	1.00
Yes	4.5 (.076)***	3.11 (.165)***	2.08 (.068)***
Control variables			
Age of respondents	1.01 (.003)***	1.01 (.008)	1.01 (.003)
Residence			
Urban	1.00	1.00	1.00
Rural	.895 (.087)	1.37 (.176)	1.38 (.081)***

Note: *p<.1; **p<.05; ***p<.01; robust standard errors are in brackets.

Table 3: Multivariate models of physical violence against women in Nigeria, 2008				
Socio-economic variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Education Background				
No Education		1.00	1.00	1.00
Primary Education		1.18 (.103)	1.12 (.104)	1.13(.134)
Secondary Education		1.06 (.115)	.984 (.117)	.973(.130)***
Higher Education		.584(.171)***	.574(.173)***	.554(.108)***
Wealth Status				
Poorest		1.00	1.00	1.00
Poorer		.850 (.117)	.848 (.118)	.804 (.103)
Middle		.979 (.119)	.989 (.120)	.950 (.126)
Richer		.916 (.130)	.932 (.131)	.831 (.123)
Richest		.901 (.143)	.909 (.146)	.799 (.134)
Employment status				
No		1.00	1.00	1.00
Yes		1.20 (.086)**	1.21 (.087)**	1.23(.114)**
Socio-cultural variables				
Ethnicity				
Yoruba	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Igbo	1.30(.076)***	1.29(.078)***	.973 (.085)	.898(.088)
Hausa	.347(.089)***	.378(.113)***	.481 (.116)***	.443(.061)***
Justification for wifebeating	1.20(.032)***	1.17(.033)***	1.18 (.033)***	1.32(.093)***
Husband Controls wife	1.66(.025)***	1.65(.025)***	1.60 (.026)***	2.12(.133)***
Life course variables				
Family violence			1.18(.027)***	1.23(.040)***
Husband drinks alcohol				
No			1.00	1.00
Yes			2.80(.083)***	3.16(.287)***
Control variables				
Age of respondents	.990 (.004)	.998 (.004)	.996 (.004)	.998 (.005)
Residence				
Urban	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Rural	1.16 (.069)**	1.10 (.079)	1.10 (.081)	1.06 (.095)
Interactions				
*Yoruba*wifebeating*				.916.(087)
*Hausas*wifebeating*				.856(.079)
*Yoruba*Husband controls*				.773(.061)***
*Hausas*Husband controls*				.779(.064)***

Note: *p<.1; **p<.05; ***p<.01; robust standard errors are in brackets.

Table 4: Multivariate models of sexual violence against women in Nigeria, 2008

Socio-economic variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Education Background				
No Education		1.00	1.00	1.00
Primary Education		1.02 (.211)	.974 (.211)	.978 (.216)
Secondary Education		.910 (.255)	.856 (.257)	.826 (.221)
Higher Education		.847 (.419)	.858 (.423)	.857 (.350)
Wealth Status				
Poorest		1.00	1.00	1.00
Poorer		1.27 (.213)	1.28 (.213)	1.29 (.284)
Middle		1.24 (.222)	1.16 (.223)	1.21 (.289)
Richer		.920 (.275)	.931 (.275)	.881 (.254)
Richest		.780 (.313)	.781 (.315)	.750 (.257)
Employment status				
No		1.00	1.00	1.00
Yes		1.04 (.170)	1.04 (.169)	1.06 (.176)
Socio-cultural variables				
Ethnicity				
Yoruba	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Igbo	2.48(.199)***	2.40(.202)***	1.81(.228)***	339(.094)***
Hausa	1.02 (.203)	.902 (.251)	1.19 (.255)	584(.161)**
Justification for wifebeating	1.30(.063)***	1.25(.066)***	1.25(.066)***	1.28(.226)
Husband Controls wife	1.86(.046)***	1.85(.046)***	1.79(.047)***	2.76(.389)***
Life course variables				
Family violence			1.13 (.060)**	1.15 (.077)**
Husband drinks alcohol				
No			1.00	1.00
Yes			2.83(.208)***	2.79(.533)***
Control variables				
Age of respondents	.998 (.008)	.998 (.010)	.996 (.010)	.997 (.009)
Residence				
Urban	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Rural	1.40 (.156)**	1.21 (.167)	1.17 (.169)	1.17 (.211)
Interactions				
*Yoruba*wifebeating*				.955(.198)
*Hausas*wifebeating*				1.02(.206)
*Yoruba*Husband controls*				.634(.102)***
*Hausas*Husband controls*				.619(.100)***

Note: *p<.1; **p<.05; ***p<.01; robust standard errors are in brackets.

Table 5: Multivariate models of Emotional violence against women in Nigeria, 2008				
Socio-economic variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Education Background				
No Education		1.00	1.00	1.00
Primary Education		1.28(.074)***	1.24(.075)***	1.29(.112)***
Secondary Education		1.23 (.090)**	1.16(.091)***	1.17(.079)
Higher Education		.975 (.137)	.993 (.137)	1.07(.167)
Wealth Status				
Poorest		1.00	1.00	1.00
Poorer		.947 (.070)	.949 (.070)	.965 (.078)
Middle		.980 (.078)	.955 (.070)	.961 (.079)
Richer		.921 (.094)	.930 (.094)	.901 (.099)
Richest		.894 (.109)	.898 (.111)	.839 (.110)
Employment status				
No		1.00	1.00	1.00
Yes		1.49(.058)***	1.49(.058)***	1.57(.099)***
Socio-cultural variables				
Ethnicity				
Yoruba	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Igbo	2.48(.075)***	2.51(.076)***	1.97 (.081)***	.405(.041)***
Hausa	2.17(.072)***	2.75(.097)***	1.21 (.089)***	1.85(.191)***
Justification for wifebeating	1.11(.023)***	1.09(.024)***	1.10 (.024)***	1.16(.091)**
Husband Controls wife	1.49(.019)***	1.50(.019)***	1.47 (.020)***	2.41(.162)***
Life course variables				
Family violence			1.10(.025)***	1.12(.036)***
Husband drinks alcohol				
No			1.00	1.00
Yes			2.47(.074)***	2.77(.242)***
Control variables				
Age of respondents	1.01(.003)***	1.01(.003)***	1.01 (.003)**	1.01(.009)***
Residence				
Urban	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Rural	1.19(.054)***	1.18(.064)***	1.17 (.064)**	1.17 (.211)**
Interactions				
*Yoruba*wifebeating*				.917 (.091)
*Hausas*wifebeating*				.985 (.084)
*Yoruba*Husband controls*				.772(.063)***
*Hausas*Husband controls*				.562(.015)***
Note: *p<.1; **p<.05; ***p<.01; robust standard errors are in brackets.				

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