

## **Prevalence, Frequency And Consequences Of Violence Against Women: Empirical Findings From Southwest Nigeria**

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### **Abstract:**

*Violence against women represents an obstacle to economic and social development. It saps women's energy, undermines their confidence, compromises their health status and deprives the society of women's full participation. Violence against women occurs in all countries, all culture and at every level of society without exception but the prevalence, frequency and consequences varies. This study estimated the prevalence, frequency and consequences of violence against women using empirical data from southwest Nigeria. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from a sample of 360 ever married or cohabiting women who were selected using a multi-stage stratified random sampling technique from the six states (Oyo, Ondo, Osun, Ogun, Ekiti and Lagos) that make up the southwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Quantitative data was generated through interview, while in-depth-interview and focus group discussion provided the qualitative data for the study. Quantitative data was processed using SPSS to generate simple percentages and logistic regression analysis and qualitative data was analyzed using ATLAS.ti. Violence against women was measured using a Shorthand and Modified Conflict Tactics Scale. Results indicated prevalence rate of 45%. More than one in every four women reported sexual violence (28.8%), and 48% of the women who have experienced violence in the 12months preceding the survey had been attacked more than once, while 22% had experienced severe*

*violence more than six times. Violence varies with parity, union and educational status. Consequences of violence include among others; loss of self-esteem, poor health and psychological depression. The study recommended enactment of laws that criminalizes violence against women, sponsor of media campaign to communicate norms that define violence against women as unacceptable and integration of gender awareness training, parenting skills and non-violent conflict resolution into elementary and high school curricula.*

**Key words:** *Violence, Health, Social, Economic, Women, Development, Prevalence and Consequences.*

*“On a daily basis, Nigerian women are beaten, raped and even murdered by members of their family for supposed transgression...” Amnesty International, Nigeria (2012).*

## **Introduction:**

The quotation before the abstract aptly captures the menace of violence against women in Nigeria. Violence against women is a worldwide malaise eating deep into the fabric of all human societies; it is common to see women violated in different aspects of life by their male counterparts (Nnadi, 2012). Violence against women is a violation of human right and a public health problem which is estimated with detrimental emotional, physical, social and physical outcome. It can lead to serious injury, disability or death and it can also lead to varieties of health challenges. Violence against women is increasingly recognized as a health issue nearly in

all countries of the world and attention is turning to the measurement of its health and other consequences for women and their families (Ellsberg et al, 2008).

Violence against women include any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such act, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (WHO, 2013). Women organization around the world has long drawn attention to violence against women, through their efforts; violence against women has now become an international concern (Krug et al, 2002).

Violence affects women's health and the health of the society at large by diverting scarce resources to the treatment of a largely preventable social ill. Data from a wide range of countries suggest violence against women account for a significant number of deaths by murder among women. Studies from Australia, Canada, Israel, South Africa and United States of America show that 40-70% of female murder victims were killed by their boyfriends or husbands (WHO, 2012). Women who live with violent partners have difficult time protecting themselves from unwanted pregnancy and disease (Luke et al, 2007). Violence affects a woman's sense of self-esteem and her ability to participate in the world (Pugh et al, 2008). Violence during pregnancy has been associated with miscarriages, late entry into prenatal care, still birth, premature labour and birth, fetal injury, low birth weight and infant death (Alexandra et al, 2011).

Violent related injuries include bruises, cut, black eyes, concussions and broken bones. It can also lead to permanent injuries such as damage to joints, partial loss of hearing or vision, and scars

from burns, bites and knives wounds (Alo et al, 2012). The psychological effects of violence against women are more debilitating than the physical effects. Fear, anxiety, fatigue, post-traumatic stress disorder, and sleeping and eating disturbances are common long term reactions to violence (Mgra, 2012). Abused women may become dependent and suggestible, and they may find it more difficult to make decisions alone. The social and economic cost of violence against women is enormous and has ripples effects throughout the society. Women may suffer isolation, inability to work, loss of wages, lack of participation in regular activities and limited ability to cater for themselves and their children (Pugh et al).

Contrary to the view of the family as a heaven of love and support; data from around the world suggest that girls and women are at a greater risk of violence in their homes than anywhere else. However, women can be violent towards their male partners and violence occurs also among partners of the same sex, the overwhelming burden of violence is borne by

women at the hands of men (Johnson, 2006). Women bear the brunt of a lot of violence in our society and silently cover then up so as to avoid stigmatization or protect their families. One of the most common forms of violence against women is that performed by a husband or male partner. A recent review of literature of violence against women in the United States observes that studies now document that women in United States are more likely to be assassinated and injured, raped or killed by a current or ex-partner than by all other types of assailant combined (Rustains and Johnson, 2004). According to a recent report by the United States Department of Justice, a survey of 1600 American showed 22.1% of the women reported being physically assaulted by a current or former spouse, cohabiting partners, boyfriend or girlfriend (WHO, 2013). A 2010 survey of 21,000 residents of England and Wales by the United Kingdom Home Office showed that 7% of women were victim of domestic violence in the last year (Ellsberg et al, 2008). Another survey in South Asia, done between 2010 to 2013, interviewed 10,000 men from a variety of countries. The survey found that over all, nearly half of these

men interviewed reported using physical and/or sexual violence against a female partner (Silverman et al, 2007).

In the same vein, available data (Alexandra et al, 2011) suggest that in some countries one in four women report sexual violence by an intimate partner and up to a – third of girls report forced sexual initiation. Hundreds of thousands more are forced into prostitution or subjected to violence or other sufferings from places such as schools, workplaces and health care institutions (Luke et al, 2007). A wide range of studies have produced remarkable consistent list of events that are said to trigger violence against women. These include not obeying the man, arguing back, not having food ready on time, not caring adequately for the children or home, questioning the man about money or girlfriends, going somewhere without the man's permission, refusing the man sex and suspecting the woman of infidelity (Alo et al, 2012).

Nevertheless, some other studies (Pugh et al, 2008; Mgra, 2012) reported that, while physical violence cut across all socio-economic

groups, women living in poverty are disproportionately affected. It is yet unclear whether poverty increases the risk of violence – whether it is because of low income in itself or because of other factors that accompany poverty, such as overcrowding or hopelessness. For some men, living in poverty is likely to generate stress, frustration and a sense of inadequacy for having failed to live up to cultural expected roles of providers. Studies from Canada and United States show that men who assault their wives are more likely to be emotionally dependent, insecure and low in self esteem, and are more likely to find it difficult to control their impulses.

Other risk factors of violence that have been reported are violence in the family of origin (Uthman et al, 2009), alcohol use by husband/partner (Gil-Gonzalez et al, 2006), personality disorder, structural inequality between man and women, rigid gender roles and notions of manhood linked to dominance, male honour and aggression (Johnson and Das, 2009). The percentage of women who had been assaulted varied from 3% or less in Australia, Canada and

United States of America to 27 percent in Nigeria, 38 percent in Republic of Korea and 52 percent of currently married women in Palestine (Ruesteins and Johnson, 2004). Educational level of both spouses, anti social personality disorder, having multiple partners, past history of violence, marital discord and dissatisfaction, difficulties in communicating between partner's, belief in family honour and sexual purity, ideologies of male entitlement and weak legal sanctions against violence have all being linked with violence against women in literature (Kitzman et al, 2003).

Violence against women is an age long psychological and social issue deep rooted in Nigerian societies (Arisi, 2011). This is an appalling human right violation and has assumed endemic nature in the country to the extent that a research conducted showed that a high number of women who were victims of violence thought they deserve it (Gender in Nigeria Report, 2012). It has become an everyday occurrence in the country. Amnesty International (2012) reported that countless women and girls in Nigeria are subjected to violence by some members of their

families and their communities. The report went further that women of all ages and from all socio economic groups, living in rural or urban communities are affected. Violence persists because discriminatory laws condone and even legalizes certain forms of violence against women in the country.

There is widespread tolerance of violence against women in the country. This tolerance is also replicated among Nigeria's law enforcement officials. The police frequently dismiss complaints of violence against women on the grounds that the state has no right to interfere in private or family matters. As a fall out from the above, hardly can a day pass without one newspaper reporting a case of defilement and incest against a young woman. News Agency of Nigeria (2013) reported that one out every five Nigerian women and girls between 15 and 24 years old have been a victim of one form of violence or the other.

In Nigeria, there are speculations that between half and two-third of Nigerian women are victims of violence in their homes (Kishor and Johnson, 2006). In recent times, there have been

several cases of violence against women and several of these cases are kept silent despite their pervasiveness. The latest National Demographic and Health Survey conducted in the country revealed that 45% of Nigerian women who have experienced physical violence since age 15 reported the perpetrator as current husband/partner (NDHS, 2008). A number of factors contribute to this high rate of violence against women in the country. In the first place, violence against women is seen as a 'private' matter to be dealt with by the family. It is often regarded as a fact of married life that must be tolerated. In addition, Nigeria is failing to implement her obligations under international law.

In 2007, Nigeria National Assembly rejected the domestication of the international law of the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW), despite having ratified it in the 1980's without reservation. The situation still remains unchanged up till now. The Domestic Violence Protection Bill 2006 in Nigeria has only passed its first reading at the National Assembly (Eight years

after-2014), and out of the 36 states in the country only four (4) have enacted the domestic violence law without proper structure for implementation (Nnadi, 2012).

The principal objective of this study is to investigate the prevalence, frequency, factors and consequences of violence in southwest Nigeria using both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection.

### Methods and Data

Data for this study was collected in Southwest Nigeria. Nigeria is located west of Africa (Latitude 5<sup>0</sup>N and 14<sup>0</sup>N, and Longitude 3<sup>0</sup>E and 15<sup>0</sup>E), and it occupies an area of approximately 913, 768 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of about 150 million people (NPC, 2006). The country has within the past five decades experienced tremendous changes as a result of the juxtaposition of the traditional and modern socio-economic mechanisms; such as a massive and rapid urbanization, industrialization and commercialization. The country is located north of the Atlantic Ocean and South of Niger Republic and Chad. It borders Cameroon in the east and

Republic of Benin in the West. Southwest is one of the six geo-political zones in the country and it has six states, these are: Ondo, Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Ekiti and Lagos.

The sample size for the study consists of 360 ever married or cohabiting women within the age range of 15-49 years. This is the reproductive age, women younger than this age may yet to be married while those older are likely to have attained grand maternal status. The selection of the sample was on the basis of sixty respondents from sixty households per state. The selection of sixty households in each state was done using multistage stratified random sampling technique.

The interview took place in a confidential atmosphere, where complete privacy was maintained between the interviewer and the respondent. In situation where privacy cannot be obtained, the interview was postponed to a later agreed date. Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) began collecting information on violence against women in 1990 with the Columbia survey. The following year, DHS programme had developed a standard module and methodology

for the collection of data on violence against women. There are three core questionnaires in the DHS survey; the household questionnaire, women questionnaire and the men questionnaire (CDHS, 1990). This study however limits itself to the adoption of the household questionnaire and women questionnaire. The men's questionnaire was excluded because the focus of this study is violence against women. The household questionnaire was used to identify all the usual household members and visitors in the selected households, and to determine the eligibility of all household members for the individual women's survey.

Measurement of violence against women was done using modified version of Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) (Straus, 1990), which included questions that asked respondents whether their current or most recent husband/partner ever perpetrated any of a series of specific acts of violence against them. Respondents who answer "Yes" to a particular item were then asked about the perpetration in the 12 months preceding the survey. Women who reported at least one of these

acts were classified as having experienced violence, while those who reported none of this act were classified in the "no violence" category. Information was also collected on the number of occurrence of such act/s. The series of specific acts included are: pushing, shaking, slapping, throwing things at the respondents, arm twisting, punching with fist or something else that can hurt, kicking, dragging, burning, threatening or attacking with a knife, gun or other types of weapon. Also included are being forced to have sexual intercourse even when the respondents did not want it, and being forced to perform sexual act which the respondents did not want.

Other information collected from the respondents apart from the socioeconomic and the biological variables of age, age at marriage, and number of living children includes union status, highest educational level attained by the respondents and her partner, employment status and husbands consumption of alcohol, household socio economic status, women attitude to wife beating, household decision making, spousal age difference and spousal educational difference.

Women's attitude to wife beating was measured through description of five scenarios. The scenarios are: if the respondents go out without telling their husband, if she neglected the children, if she argues with her husband, if she refuse to have sex with her husband and if she burns food. Women who agreed with one or more of the above are regarded to justify wife beating. Exposure to childhood violence was measured by asking the respondents if they can recall whether their father ever beat their mothers. Respondents with such memory are regarded as being exposed to violence during childhood. They were also asked whether they are married or cohabiting to measure union status. And finally, respondents were asked if they make decisions regarding the running of the household with their husband/partner, or their husband or partner make the decision alone. Data analysis for the interview was done using Statistical Packages for the Social Scientist (SPSS). This involves largely the generation of simple percentages and the estimation of logistic regression for the multivariate analysis. Logistic regression was employed in order to get the "net effect" of each

of the variable on the relationship of interest. Data for the qualitative aspect of the study was generated through focus group discussion and in-depth interview; these were organized along the major themes of experience of violence, frequency of violence and consequences of violence. Six focus group discussions and six in-depth interviews were conducted on the basis of one per state. Qualitative data was analyzed using ATLAS.ti.

### Results

The attempt to unravel the factors responsible for violence against women and its consequences in southwest Nigeria have received some reactions from the respondents which are presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3. The Tables revealed that violence against women result from many factors which include social, economic and biological variables. Details of the findings and discussion are presented in the section that follows.

As a recapitulation, measurement of violence against women was done using modified version of Conflict Tactics Scale, which involved questions that asked respondents whether their

current or most recent husband/partner ever perpetrated any of a series of specific acts of violence. Respondents who answered Yes to a particular item were then asked about the perpetration in the 12 months preceding the survey. The report is presented in Table 1. Forty-five percent (162) of the sampled women reported ever experience of violence, while 28.3% (102) reported experiencing violence in the 12 months preceding the survey. Not surprising the prevalence rate in the 12 months preceding the survey is substantially lower than respondent's lifetime experience. These rates are lower than what was estimated for spousal violence for the same region in 2011. This author and some other scholars estimated a spousal violence prevalence rate of 47.3% and 32% for ever and current experience of spousal violence respectively in 2011. It is also lower than the estimate of (54%) for Ethiopia in findings from WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women in 2006. However, the rates were higher than the estimates of 15% for ever experience, and 4% for current experience of spousal violence in Japan (Ellbergs et al, 2008).

Slapping/punching and arm twisting (25.3%) and throwing things at (24.7%) are the most widely reported. Sexual violence accounted for 28.4% of the violence experience in the study population. Evidence from the qualitative investigation suggests that most (72%) of the respondents who reported sexual violence also experience some other forms of physical violence. Threatening or attack with a gun was not reported while burning is not a common violence experience in the study population.

Respondents reported more of physical violence than sexual violence. This is not surprising because discussion of sex is still regarded as a taboo in the study population and as such many respondents will be more comfortable reporting physical violence than sexual violence. The current and lifetime prevalence rate of violence against women reported in this study is higher than NDHS (2008) estimates. NDHS in 2008 estimated a prevalence rate of 28% and 17% for physical and sexual violence respectively in Nigeria. In 2005, Kishor reported a prevalence rate of 17% for Cambodia, 29% for Haiti and 22%

for Dominican Republic. Frequency of experience of violence was presented in Table 2. About 90% of women abused had been attacked more than once and 50% had experienced violence four or more times. More than one-fifth of the respondents have experienced violence more than six times. This is confirmation of the wide spread tolerance of acceptance of violence against women in the study population.

### **Factors of Violence against Women**

Researchers have only recently begun to look for individual and community factors which might affect the rate of partner's violence. Although violence against women is found to exist in most places, indeed; there is an emerging consensus that interplay of personal, situational, social and cultural factors combine to cause abuse (Alo et al, 2012), there is still only limited information on which factors are the most important.

Table 3 shows the percentage distribution of respondent's lifetime and current experience of violence. From the table, there is a correlation between violence against women and women's

age. The youngest age (15-19 years) had the highest (48.1%) experience of violence. Experience of violence against women decrease progressively as age increases; this is correct for current and ever experience of violence. This pattern is similar to the report from WHO multicounty study which estimated a rate of 48% for urban Bangladesh for women aged 15 – 19 years within the twelve months before the survey (WHO, 2006). This is probably due to the association between age and maturity, and with increase in age; women could be less vulnerable to violence from their partner.

Age at first marriage is also associated with the experience of violence by the respondents as revealed in panel ii of Table 2. Respondents who were younger than 20 years at the point of marriage accounted for 48.1% of the violence experience by the respondents. It is probable that a woman who married at a later age has likely had the opportunity to pursue higher education, to be employed, either or both of which may enable the woman to be autonomous and command some

respect from her spouse. And thus make them less vulnerable to violence from their partner.

The relationship between number of living children of the respondents and violence experience was also explored in panel iii of Table 3. More than half (55.6%) of the respondents who have ever experience violence have no living children, while the percentage progressively decrease as the number of living children increase. The current experience of violence by women who had five or more living children (2.9%) is 20 times lesser than the experience of those without any child. Children are security materials in African marriage and fertility enhances the status of a woman. A childless marriage is more vulnerable to conflict than marriage with children. Childlessness in marriage is a conflict generating mechanism, especially in Africa where so much importance is placed on fertility within marriage.

There is also a consistent relationship between the highest level of respondent's education and their exposure to violence. Panel iv of Table 3 reveals that more than half (50.6) of the respondents who reported experience of violence

has no formal education. The lifetime and current experience of violence of the respondents decrease consistently as educational level increases. Education is an eye opener, it offers protective value to the women and also enhances the degree of control a woman has over her body. It therefore has protective effect on women.

Panel v of Table 3 reveals that women who are unemployed reported more violent experience (44.4%) than respondents in the self-employed category (13.6%). The probable reason is that employment is financial empowerment. Women who are economically and financially independent may be less likely to experience violence from their partner than their dependent counterparts. Women who are employed in formal setting exhibited an unusual high pattern of violence. This may not be unconnected with the constant separation of the woman from home as a result of the demand of her official duties.

The relationship between respondent's experience of violence and exposure to violence during childhood was explored in panel vi of Table 3. More than two-third (67.3%) of the

respondent who claimed their mothers were frequently beaten or abused by their fathers were also victim of violence in their marriages. Children are often traumatized by the abuse of their mother. Violence can have a brutalizing effect, leading to a circle of violence perpetuated down the generation. This is in alignment with studies in Brazil, Canada, Chile, Columbia, Spain and United States (Ellsbergs et al, 2008 and Black et al, 2008). Childhood exposure to violence rubber stamped the idea that violence is a normal aspect of relationship and they should prepare their mind for it when they eventually get married.

Panel vii of Table 3 shows the relationship between union status and violence against women. The result indicated that cohabitation rather being married is related to higher experience of violence from their spouse. About two-third (64.2%) of the respondents with violence experience are cohabiting. This is against 35.8% of their counterparts who are married. Marriage among the Yoruba's of southwest Nigeria is a unification of two families. This can make couple less vulnerable to violence from one another (Alo et al,

2012). Women in cohabiting relationship may not enjoy the same privilege and rights as do a married woman.

Husband's consumptions of alcohol is also revealed in this analysis as a risk factor for violence against women. This is revealed in panel viii of Table 3. More than half of the respondents (54.3) who experience violence reported that their partner frequently got drunk. This is against 4.9% of those whose husband never consumes alcohol. Alcoholic intoxication easily triggers aggression and this may partly explain the differences in the violence experiences of respondents whose partner frequently get drunk and those whose partners do not drink alcohol. The relationship between alcohol use and violence is not very clear. Many researchers believe that alcohol operates as a situational factor, increasing the likelihood of violence by providing ready fodder for arguments between couples. Others argue that the link between violence and alcohol is culturally dependent, and exists only in setting when collective expectation is that drinking causes or excuses certain behaviours (Mgra, 2012). Despite

the conflicting opinions about the causal role played by alcohol, the evidence is that women who live with heavy drinker run a far greater risk of physical violence, and that men who have been drinking inflict more serious violence at the time of the assault (Johnson, 2006).

Panel ix of Table 3 shows the relationship between socioeconomic status of the household and violence against women. The socioeconomic status of the household was measured using household asset data. These include; ownership of a number of consumer items ranging from television, bicycle or car, as well as dwelling characteristics such as source of drinking water, sanitation facilities and type of flouring materials. Each asset was assigned a weight generated through principal component analysis. The resulting asset scores were standardized in relation to a normal distribution with a mean of zero (Gwatkin et al, 2000). Each household was then assigned a score for each asset, and the scores were summed for each household. The sample was divided into quintiles from one (lowest) to five (highest). The index is consistent with

expenditure and income measure. Women from the lowest 40% were classified as low, while those in the highest 40% were classified as being in the high socioeconomic status and those in the 20% in between were classified as being in the middle socio-economic status. The result indicated that household socioeconomic status is a factor of violence against women. Almost half (49.4%) of the respondents with violence experience are from households with low socio-economic status, while only 15.4% of respondents with similar experience are from households with high socioeconomic status. It is not yet clear why low socioeconomic status increases the risk of violence – whether it is because of low socio-economic status itself, or because of other factors that accompany low socio-economic status, such as overcrowding or hopelessness. For some men, living in low socio-economic status household is likely to generate stress, frustration and a sense of inadequacy for having failed to live up to culturally expected role of providers. It may also work by providing ready materials for marital disagreements or by making it more difficult for

women to leave violent or otherwise unsatisfactory relationships (Heise, 1998).

The relationship between women's attitude to wife beating and violence against women was explored in part x of Table 3. Following the patterns of Demographic and Health Survey, five scenarios were described and respondents were asked to indicate whether they agree or disagree that wife beating is justified. The scenarios are: (a) If she goes out without telling her husband, (b) if she neglected the children, (c) if she argues with her husband, (d) if she refuses to have sex with the husband and (e) if she burns food. Respondents who agree with one or more of the above are regarded to justify wife beating. Women who justify wife beating had higher experience of violence in their marriages than those who did not. Four out of every five respondents out of those who justified wife beaten are also victim of violence in their marriages. In the qualitative segment many discussants agree with the idea that men have the right to discipline their wives, if necessary by force. An excerpt: *"I think if the wife is guilty, the husband has the right to hit her..."*

This is a reflection of the patriarchal nature of Yoruba society where women are seen as object to be acquired and possessed by men. One discussant put it thus *"...mother teaches their daughter to accept the role that societies assign to them and they punish deviant behavior to ensure their sexual and social acceptance..."* Another woman said: *"The idea of male dominance is present in most societies...Violence should not be considered an aberration but an extension of a continuum of beliefs that grant men the right to control women's behavior."* Agreement with the justification for a man beating his wife attest to the socialization of women in traditional gender role norms that man has the right over the behaviour and bodies of their wives.

Decision making in the households, particularly those who participates in and has control over the process, is an aspect of gender relations that has both cross cultural and household relevance. Women who make decision about the running of the household jointly with their husband / partner experience lower degree of violence than women whose husbands make

decision regarding the running of the household alone. Almost two third (65.4%) of the surveyed women with violence experience do not take part in decision making in the household. This is against 34.6% of respondents who makes decision jointly with their husbands. It has been suggested that wife beating occur more often in societies in which men have economic and decision making power in the household (Levinson, 2009). Husbands who take decision regarding the running of the home unilaterally without recourse to the wife are very likely not to be only authoritarian, but dictatorial. Once any of the decision of an authoritarian husband is challenged there is the tendency of a violent reaction from him.

The relationship between women's experience of violence and husband level of education was explored in panel xii of Tables 3. A woman whose husband has no formal education is more prone to violence. This is true for current and lifetime experience. Education is an eye opener and it is one variable that has a multiplier effect of many other social and economic

variables. The higher the level of a man's education the most likely the higher the income, status, household and the likely he perceive wife battering as a barbaric attitude.

The age difference between the husband and the wife was also examined in relation to violence against women. The results are presented in panel xiii of Table 3. For current experience of violence; women that are 0-4 years younger than their spouse are more probable to violence, while for lifetime experience women in a relationship where they are older than their spouse are more vulnerable to violence than when wives are younger than their husbands. The tendency for inferiority complex is there when the husband is younger than the wife, and this in itself is capable of generating conflict in the home stead.

The difference in highest educational attainments of spouse was also found to be associated with women experience of violence as revealed in panel xiv of Table 3. Women in relationship whose husbands and wives have no formal education is more prone to violence than when they both has the same level of education.

The probability is least when wife has more education or husband has more education. This is true for lifetime experience and truer for current experience of violence. Differences in educational attainment breed inequalities in income, status and social networking. The case is worse if the wife has more education than the husband; this could lead to insubordination and arrogance which may often generate violence. The pictures in figure 1 as captured by Amnesty International in a recent survey in Nigeria speak for themselves.

### **Multivariate Analysis**

Logistic regression analysis was used to further clarify the relationship between violence against women and other correlates. The result is presented in Table 4 and the unit of analysis is women ever experience of violence. A set of modeling block approach was used where each set of covariates were entered in stages. There were three stages in all. Stage 1 was a straight forward relationship between the biological characteristics of age, age at marriage and number of living children on one hand and respondents ever experience of violence on the other hand. In stage

2, the socioeconomic variables of educational status of respondents and their partner, employment status, union status and households socio economic status were introduced into the relationship, while in stage 3, the exposure variables of partner's consumption of alcohol, women attitude to wife beating, exposure to violence during childhood, household decision making, spousal age difference and spousal educational difference were introduced. This approach allows the examination of the extent of confounding between the block of factors by examining the manner in which each subsequent factor affects the relationship between the variables entered in earlier stage and women experience of violence. Data presented for this analysis are odds ratios and their respective p-values.

The estimates of the regression model in stage 1 show that the biological variables of age, age at marriage and number of living children are strong determinants of women experience of violence. The three variables were measured as continuous variables. The odds ratio for respondents age indicate an inverse effect, the

higher the age of respondents, the less likely she is to experience violence from her partner. The odds ratio revealed that with each additional year, the likelihood of the respondent experience of violence from her partner is 1.41 times lower than the previous year. The result for age at marriage shows a similar pattern though with a lower odd ratio and lower level of significance. Number of living children indicated the expected positive relationship. The odd ratio of 1.86 implies that with each additional child, the risk of women experience of violence from her partner increases by 1.86 times. The result is significant at 5% level.

Stage 2 shows the effect of adding the socio-economic variables of educational status of respondents and that of her partner, employment status, union status and household socio-economic status into the relationship. The inclusion of these variables does not alter the significant effects of the biological variables earlier included, although there were slight reductions in their odd ratios but at a higher level of significance. Of particular interest is the change observed in the odd ratios of

respondent's age and number of living children where the level of significance increases from 5% to 1%. The level of significance for age at marriage also increases from 10% to 5%. The expected inverse relationship between women's educational status and women's experience of violence was noticed in stage 2. Women who had post-secondary education are 1.92 times less likely to experience violence than women who had no formal education, while women with primary education are 1.76 times less likely than those without formal education. Similar pattern was displayed by the respondent's partner's educational level though with a higher level of significance. Respondents whose partner had post-secondary education is 1.96 times less likely to suffer violence from their partner than their counterpart whose partner has no formal education. The same pattern was displayed in the odd ratio for respondent's employment status though with a reduced odds. Women who are self-employed are 1.22 times less likely to experience violence with their partners than respondents who are unemployed.

The relationship between union status of respondents and their experience of violence was also evaluated in stage 2; Women who are cohabiting are 1.42 times more likely to experience violence from their partner than their married counterparts. The result for socioeconomic status of respondents household was not surprising. Women in the high socioeconomic status household are 2.69 times less likely than those in the low socioeconomic status households. All the odds are significant at 1% level.

The introduction of the exposure variables of partner's consumption of alcohol, women attitude to wife beating, exposure to violence during childhood, household decision making, spousal age difference and spousal educational difference were introduced into the relationship in stage 3. The addition of these variables does not alter in any significant way; the effects of the biological and socioeconomic variables earlier introduced in stages 1 and 2. Nevertheless, there were slight changes in their odd ratios but the level of significance remains largely unchanged.

As expected, women whose partners consume alcohol frequently are 1.86 times more likely than those women whose husband never consume alcohol to experience violence from their partner. The result is significant at 1% level. In the same vein, women who do not justify wife beating are 2.93 times less likely to experience violence from their partner than respondents who justify wife beating, while respondents who were not exposed to violence during childhood are 1.66 times less likely than those who had childhood exposure to violence to experience violence from their partner. The result is significant at 1% level. Respondents who make household decisions jointly with their partners are 1.88 times less likely to experience violence than those respondents whose husbands make decisions alone. This is largely a confirmation of our findings in Table 3.

The relationship between spousal age difference and women experience of violence was also explored in Table 4. Wives who are older than their spouse are 2.18 times less likely to experience violence from their partners than those respondents who are 10 years, or more younger

than their spouse. The result is significant at 10% level. In the same vein, respondents in a relationship where the respondents or the partner has some level of education are 1.88 times less likely to experience violence from their partner than respondents in a relationship where both have no formal education. The result is significant at 5% level. On a final analysis, the biological variables of age, age at marriage and number of living children were significant determinants of violence against women. The level of significance increase between stage 1 and stage 2, and remains constant in stage 3. This is regardless of all other variable introduced into the relationship.

The results in Table 4 is largely a confirmation of our earlier findings on Table 3, and it goes a long way to suggest the important position of respondent's age, respondents' age at marriage, number of living children and marital status in the determination of violence against women in the study population. Other variables that are also significant are household socioeconomic status, partner's consumption of alcohol, women's attitude to wife beating and

exposure to violence during childhood. However, it can be hypothesized that women who have ever experienced violence from their partners differs significantly from women who have not, because they are married, got married at matured age, have fewer number of children, they have been properly married, their husband does not consume alcohol, they belongs to high socioeconomic status households, they are not favourably disposed to violence against women and they were not exposed to violence as a child.

### Discussion

Violence in the 12 months preceding the survey is far lower than lifetime experience of violence by the respondents. Forty-five percent of the respondents (162) reported ever experience of violence, while 28.3% (102) reported current experience of violence. Slapping/pushing and arm twisting, and throwing things at are the most widely reported. Sexual violence accounted for 28.4% of the violence experience in the study population. Threatening or attack with a gun was not reported while burning was not reported at all. The frequency of violence in the study population

is alarming. About 90% of the abused women have been attacked more than once, while more than one in every five of them have been attacked more than six times.

On the factors associated with violence against women in southwest Nigeria. Young age at marriage appears to be a risk factor for being a victim of violence against women in the study population. This is in agreement with the submission of Roman et al (2007) in Canada, William et al (2011) in Bangladesh and World Health Organization multi country study on women's health and domestic violence (Ellsberg et al, 2008). These studies reported that younger women especially those 15-19 years were at a higher risk of current physical or sexual violence or both. Age is a biological variable that has to do with maturity. The responsibilities associated with marriage are so enormous among the Yoruba's of southwest Nigeria that it would require a lot of maturity which can only come with age to cope.

Heise and Moreno (2002) in a study conducted for the World Health Organization shows that violence against women cut across all

socioeconomic groups but that women living in poverty are disproportionately affected. This position is also supported in the present analysis. The relationship between socioeconomic status of the women's household and exposure to violence is indicated in this study. Moreover, women's favourable attitude to violence against women is also indicated in this study as a determinant of spousal violence. One of the prominent theories that explain perpetration of violence against women is the maintenance of patriarchy and male dominance within a society (Taft, 2009), hence women acceptance of the justification of wife beating. Patriarchal male dominance norm reflects gender inequality and legitimizes violence against women. This is especially true of Yoruba speaking society of southwest Nigeria; this is also true of many societies of Africa south of Sahara. This inequality creates power hierarchies where men are perceived in the society as economically and religiously superior, and of higher status compared to women (Ali and Bustamante-Gavino, 2008). As such, men are socialized to believe they are superior to women, should dominate their partners and endorse traditional gender roles.

Women subordination and submission is then considered to be normal, expected and accepted. This gender inequality and male dominance reduces the opportunity for women to be involved in decision making at every level, decreases the resources available to them and increases the acceptance of the use of violence against them.

However, women who reported a history of violence experience violence more than women who reported no such history. This indeed is still a reflection of the patriarchal nature of Yoruba speaking society of southwest Nigeria where “father hitting mother” is more of a normal behaviour than an exception. Childhood exposure to parental violence, especially female child reinforces the belief in the child the right of a man to exhibit violent acts towards his wife/partner. Hence the situation is assumed to be normal when the child eventually becomes a victim later in life when she is married.

Violence against women has debilitating health consequences aside from diverting the scarce resources in the society to the treatment of this presentable social ill. Hear one of the

discussants from the focus group discussion (fgd) session: *“I was battered by my husband. I spent two weeks on admission in the hospital. Although he paid the medical bill, but the two weeks was hell”*. Another one said: *“Look at my left eye, I still cannot use it properly. My husband struck me with a blow and I almost went blind, my daughter who came to plead for me from her father also received severe blow for which she cannot go to school for three days”*. Another one said she had lost a pregnancy in the past courtesy of the beating she received from her husband.

On further inquiry, none of the cases in reference was brought to the attention of the law. According to the discussants, all the cases were treated as domestic issue by the extended family members. The loss in term of manpower to the Gross Domestic Product by these battered women as a result of their inability to contribute to the economic development is so enormous and unquantifiable.

Several cases of broken limbs, swollen eyes, disjointed bones and bruises were also reported. Unfortunately, none of them had the courage to move out of this abusive relationship.

On inquiry, one respondent said: *“How can I leave? That is what he wants. He wants me to leave so that he can marry another woman, and I cannot allow my children to suffer unnecessarily in the hand of another woman. I am staying back because of my children.”* Another one observed: *“I have not been able to move out because each time he finish beating me, he later come to his senses, he will be full of apology and he will promise not to do it again after taking care of me.”* On further inquiry whether the husband keeps to his promise of never to beat her again, she noted: *“Never! Anytime I do anything to make him angry, he will still beat me.”*

It was very clear from the in-depth interview that most battered women suffer fear, anxiety and fatigue. The mention of their husband brings adrenalin down their spine. Some of them even refused participation once they get to know the subject of discussion and those who participated were always looking around to see if anybody is within a hearing distance. *“...if he gets to find me here or somebody reports to him that I was in this meeting, I will be in trouble”* noted one woman. When asked if they could make decisions

regarding their health treatment in the absence of their husband, the chorus was “no”. *“How can I? when he (the husband) is the one who is going to pay...”* noted one of them. This again brings to the fore the economical/financial dependencies of the respondents on their husbands. This in itself places the women at subordinate position. *“I was working before he married me. After our marriage, he forced me to resign from my work and that I should concentrate on taking care of the home and the children...”* observed one of the discussants.

The women were asked probable reasons that can trigger their being battered. Provided reasons are:

*“If I refuse to have sex with him, maybe because I am tired.”*

*“If he meets the house untidy.”*

*“If his food is not ready on time or I talk back at him.”*

*“If I go out without telling him or I keep late outside, even if I took permission from him before going out.”*

*“If I keep an unapproved company by him”.*

*“If I nag or challenge his behaviour.”*

*“If I am suspected of having a sexual relationship outside marriage.”*

*“If I am not showing enough respect to my husband’s family.”*

Several other trivial reasons were advanced. The conclusion from here is that women in the study population are regarded more as a commodity acquired by men during marriage. They are regarded as objects and less as a human being. This is the kind of treatment meted out to them by the men. This position is justified by the African patriarchal custom that resides all the authority in the home with the men. And the women are in no position to challenge this because they have been socialized by the society to accept such. One woman observed, *“My parents told me I should always treat my husband reverently if I want to stay in his house till old age.”* They have been trained to be docile, submissive, meek and unchallenging. On the contrary, their male counterparts have been trained to be aggressive, dominant and assertive. This sex role socialization is taking its toll on women folk in the study population. Unfortunately, these respondents have been

advancing this sex role socialization on their own children. One woman reported, *“... for the boy child, I bought football and guns for him as toy and for the girl child, I bought doll.”* This is the consensus from other discussants. The implication of this is that right from this young age, the girl child and the boy child has been made to know they are different. This is a perpetration of the stereotyping which eventually ends up as violence against women in the society later.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The prevalence rate of violence against women in the study population is very high and having established in the literature that violence against women can lead to serious injury, disability or death. It can also lead to a variety of health problem, such as miscarriage, abortion, mental disorder etc. In the like manner, violence against women has been associated with detrimental emotional, psychological and physical outcome. It is therefore expedient that efforts should be directed towards its amelioration if not complete eradication. In the light of this, the following policy is proposed by this study.

There should be social and economic changes which empower women to take their rights. Child marriage should be protected by law and the education of girl child should be made compulsory. This will not only increase the age at which women gets married, but will also empower them economically to protect themselves against violence. Policy makers must examine the social and cultural practices which undermine gender equality. The patriarchal nature of Yoruba society should be demystified. Boy and girl child should be socialized to see themselves as not only equals but that they also have equal opportunities in life. The idea of typifying different sets of toys for the boy and girl child should be discouraged.

Policy makers must identify effective ways of raising awareness about violence against women and develop supportive social structure for victims. There should be a general awakening of women to take control of their bodies and lives. The women non-governmental organizations should take up this responsibility. Good parenting skill should be integrated into the existing maternal health programme. Social, political,

community and religious leaders should be enlisted in speaking out against violence against women, while micro finance programmes for women financial empowerment should be introduced.

The study also recommends the repeal of discriminatory laws and strengthening of pro-women laws. To achieve lasting change, it is important to enact laws and policies that address discrimination against women and promote gender equality. In the like manner any strategy to combat violence against women must attack the root causes of the problem in addition to treating the symptoms. This means challenging the social attitudes and behaviour that underscore men's violence and renegotiating the meaning of gender and sexuality, and the balance of power between men and women at all levels of society. And lastly there should be integration of violence prevention into social and educational policies and thereby promote gender and social equality.

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Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondents by their Ever Experience and Current experience of specific types of violent act

Acts of Violence	Percentage Ever	Percentage in the last 12 months
Slapping / Punching and arm twisting	25.3	21.6
Pushing / Kicking	6.2	7.8
Strangling, Chocking / Dragging	11.1	9.8
Threatening with a knife	2.5	1.9
Threatening or attack with a gun	0	0
Arm twisting and throwing things at	24.7	26.9
Forced Intercourse	19.8	22.5
Perform sexual act they did not like	8.6	8.8
Burning	1.9	0.9
N	162	102

Table 2: Frequency of Violence experience in the last 12 months

Number of Times	Frequency
Once	10.8
Two to three times	39.2
Four to five times	28.4
Six times or more	21.6
N	102

Table 3: Percentage distribution of Respondents by Ever Experience of Violence and Violence

Experience in the 12 months preceding the survey by selected characteristics

Variables	Ever Experience N =162	Violence in 12 months N =102
i. Age of Respondents		
15 – 19	48.1	31.4
20 – 24	19.1	27.5
25 – 29	13.6	16.7
30 – 34	11.1	14.7
35+	8.0	9.8
ii. Age at Marriage		
< 15	6.2	28.4
15 – 19	41.9	45.1
20 – 24	27.2	9.8
25+	24.6	16.7
iii. Number of Children Ever born		
None	55.6	48.0
1 – 2	23.5	29.4
3 – 4	12.3	20.6
5+	8.6	2.9
iv. Respondent's highest level of education		
No formal Education	50.6	41.2
Primary	24.6	28.4
Secondary	9.3	19.6
Post secondary	3.1	10.8
v. Respondent's husband highest level of education		
No formal education	37.7	56.9
Primary	29.0	22.5
Secondary	25.3	12.7
Post secondary	8.0	7.8
vi. Employment Status		
Unemployment	44.4	58.8
Self Employed	13.6	13.7

Employed in formal settings	41.9	27.5
vii. Childhood exposure to violence		
Yes	67.3	61.8
No	37.7	38.2
viii. Union Status		
Married	35.8	29.4
Cohabiting	64.2	70.6
ix. Husband consumption of Alcohol		
Never	4.9	9.8
Rarely	40.7	35.2
Frequently	54.3	54.9
x. Household Socio-Economic Status		
Low	49.4	64.7
Middle	35.2	27.5
High	15.4	7.8
xi. Women attitude to wife beating		
Justified	80.2	76.5
Not Justified	19.8	23.5
xii. Household decision making		
Husband only	65.4	71.6
Decision jointly taken	34.6	28.4
xiii. Spousal age difference		
Wife older than spouse	37.0	21.6
Wife 0 - 4 years younger	30.2	47.1
Wife 5 - 9 years younger	8.0	19.6
Wife 10+ years younger	24.6	11.8
xiv. Spousal educational difference		
Both have no formal education	35.8	32.6
One has some level of education	28.4	25.5

Wife has more education	11.1	9.8
Spouse has the same level of Education	13.6	19.6
Husband has more education	11.1	12.7

Table 4: Logistic Regression Estimates of Respondents Ever Experience of Violence presented as odds

Explanatory variables	Stage 1 Exp ( $\beta$ )	Stage 2 Exp ( $\beta$ )	Stage 3 Exp ( $\beta$ )
Age @	-1.41**	-	-1.27***
Age at marriage	-1.12*	-1.18**	-1.08***
Number of living children	1.86**	1.56***	1.31***
Educational Status			
No formal education		R.C.	R.C.
Primary		-1.76*	-1.30*
Secondary		-1.79*	-1.42*
Post-secondary		-1.92*	-1.61*
Husbands highest level of education			
No formal education		R.C.	R.C.
Primary education		-1.42**	1.28**
Secondary education		-1.88**	-1.62**
Post secondary education		-1.96**	-1.68**
Employment Status			
Unemployed		R.C.	R.C.
Self employed		-1.22**	-1.18**
Employed in formal setting		-1.11**	-1.08**
Union Status			
Married		R.C.	R.C.

Cohabiting		1.42***	1.21***
Household Socio-Economic Status			
Low		R.C.	R.C.
Middle		-1.92***	-1.88***
High		-2.69***	-2.66***
Partner consumption of alcohol			
Never			R.C.
Rarely			1.21***
Frequently			1.86***
Women's attitude to wife beating			
Justify wife beating			R.C.
Do not justify wife beating			-2.93***
Exposure to violence during childhood			
Yes			R.C.
No			-1.66***
Household decision making			
Husband's only			R.C.
Decision jointly taken			-1.88
Spousal age difference			
Wife older than spouse			-2.18*
Wife 0-4 years younger			-1.96*
Wife 5 – 9 years younger			-1.88*
Wife 10 years or more younger			R.C.
Spousal educational difference			
Both have no formal education			R.C.
One has some level of education			-1.88**
Wife has more education			-1.96**
Husband has more education			1.22**

Fit of Model			
X <sup>2</sup> (Model of Chi-square	-3363.41	2682.85	3459.44
Degree of Freedom	17	22	25
Log of Likelihood	8927.79	8815.85	8661.82

R.C. denoted Reference Category

\*\*\* P< 0.01

\*\* P<0.05

\*P<0.10



Figure 1: Brutality in action

Source: Amnesty International Nigeria, 2012.