

Intimate Partner Violence in Nigeria: Do Community and State Characteristics Matter?

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Intimate partner violence is increasingly recognized as an important social and public health problem and a violation of human rights. According to the 2008 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey, 18 percent of ever married women had experienced intimate partner physical violence, 4 percent had experienced intimate partner sexual violence, and 24 percent had experienced intimate partner emotional violence at least once in their life time. Of women who had ever been pregnant, 5 percent had experienced physical violence during pregnancy. The highest rates of violence victimization in the current union or most recent union, regardless of the type of violence, were found in the South South (46%), North Central (38%), and south East (35%) zones (national Population Commission and ICF Macro, 2009).

Many studies document adverse reproductive, mental and physical health consequences for women who have experienced partner violence and sexual assault, whether in childhood or adulthood. Reproductive health consequences of intimate partner violence include unwanted pregnancy, gynecological disorders, unsafe abortions, pregnancy complications and pelvic inflammatory diseases. Sexual violence, in particular, has been associated with victims' increased involvement in sex work, inconsistent condom use, fear of the perceived consequences of negotiating condom use, fear of talking with one's partner about pregnancy prevention, a higher perceived risk for acquiring a sexually transmitted disease, and low perceived control over one's sexuality (Braitstein et al., 2003; Campbell, 2002; Coker et al. 2000; Heise et al., 2002; Jewkes et al., 2001; Wingwood et al., 2001). The physical health sequelae of gender-based violence include injury, functional impairment, poor subjective health, and chronic conditions such as chronic pain, gastro-intestinal disorders, irritable bowel syndrome and fibromyalgia. In addition, sexual violence has been linked with increased risk of HIV infection (Dunkle et al., 2004; Raj et al., 2004; van der Straten et al., 1998) and an increased likelihood of alcohol and drug use (Braitstein et al., 2003; Buzi et al., 2003; Liebeschütz et al., 2002). Some studies have also found intimate partner violence to be associated with significantly higher levels of posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, attempted and actual suicide, and psychological distress (Buzi et al., 2003; Campbell, 2002; Haj-Yahi & Tamish, 2001; Molnar et al., 2001; Romans et al., 2002).

Although it is increasingly recognized that "where a person lives and "who his/her neighbors are" may matter for health and social outcomes, there have been few empirical studies of the association of community and larger area characteristics with intimate partner violence in low- and middle-income countries. The current paper examines contextual factors associated with to the risk of reported intimate partner violence victimization in the past 12 months among currently married women in Nigeria. The paper contributes to the literature by going beyond the community to examine the significance of state-level factors for intimate partner violence. Given that community factors often account for a significantly lower proportion of the variation explained than do individual or family-level characteristics, the following research questions are of interest:

- (1) Do state characteristics matter at all for women's risk of intimate partner victimization?
- (2) Do community and state characteristics have varying associations with intimate partner violence among different subgroups of women?

Data

Data are drawn from the nationally-representative 2008 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey, which used a multi-stage cluster sampling design and was representative at the state level (36 states plus the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja). The survey sample consisted of sample of 36,800 households and 33, 385 completely-interviewed women aged 15-49 of whom 21,468 were asked questions on domestic violence.

Measures

There were four binary measures of a woman's victimization by her current partner in the past 12 months:

- (1) Emotional violence. This variable was coded 1 if the woman responded that she experienced the following acts "often" or "sometimes" in the past 12 months, and zero, otherwise: (a) said or did something to humiliate her in front of others; (b) threatened to hurt or harm her or someone close to her; (c) insulted her or made her feel bad about herself.
- (2) Physical violence. This variable was coded 1 if the woman responded that she had experienced at least one of the following act "often" or "sometimes" in the past 12 months, and zero, otherwise: (a) pushed her; shook her, or threw something at her; (b) slapped her; (c) twisted her arm or pulled her hair; (d) punched her with his fist or with something that could hurt her; (e) kicked her, dragged her, or beat her up; (f) tried to choke her or burn her on purpose; (g) threatened her or attacked her with a knife, gun or any other weapon.
- (3) Sexual violence. This variable was coded 1 if the woman responded that she experienced the following acts often or sometimes in the past 12 months and zero otherwise: a) physically forced her to have sexual intercourse with him even when she did not want to; (b) forced her to perform any sexual acts she did not want to.

Community variables were constructed by aggregating responses to questions of interest across respondents from the community, with the enumeration area or primary sampling unit being used as an approximation of the community. State variables were constructed using a similar approach. State-level variables included: (a) norms belief in women's rights to refuses; gender-inequitable attitudes toward sex; degree to which widows inherit any of their deceased husband's assets; (b) notions of masculinity (multiple sexual partnerships among men; belief in husband-dominated decision making; (c) women's status (female secondary school attendance). Community-level factors included: (a) poverty; male unemployment; residential instability; and community acceptance of wife beating. The choice of which factors to retain at the community and state levels will be guided by Heise's (1998) conceptual model for IPV, which draws from the ecological framework

Methods

The analysis is being conducted with Stata Version 11.0. Multilevel logit regression models will be used for the multivariate analysis in order to capture the hierarchical structure of the data set, with women (level 1) nested in communities (level 2), which are, in turn, nested in states. Variance inflation factors will be used to assess multicollinearity.

Results

As shown in Table 1 the prevalence of all forms of intimate partner violence varies significantly by the following state characteristics: the female secondary school attendance rate, men's beliefs in husband-dominated decision making; and acceptance of wife beating. However, the differentials are somewhat unexpected in some cases. For example, while the prevalence of emotional violence victimization declines with an increase in the level of female education, the prevalence of physical violence victimization increases from as levels of female education increase. The prevalence of emotional violence victimization increases with the level of acceptance of wife beating but physical violence associations may very well be curvilinear. States with high levels of multiple partnerships among men have physical violence victimization rates that are three times as high as those of states with low levels.

Table 1. Percentage of currently married women aged 15-49 years who experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months by type of violence and state characteristics, Nigeria 2008

State Characteristics	Emotional	Physical	Sexual	Any	N
Female secondary school attendance	*	***	***	**	

Low	24.6	8.7	3.0	27.5	8651
Medium	22.1	23.4	3.5	32.7	5701
High	21.1	22.7	5.5	30.6	3957
Belief in women's rights to refuse sex		***			
Low	22.1	12.8	3.6	27.7	7142
Medium	22.6	18.6	4.0	30.5	5871
High	22.2	19.9	3.8	29.9	5337
Gender-inequitable attitudes towards sexual activity	***	***		***	
Low	21.6	16.3	3.3	28.8	6508
Medium	25.7	20.8	4.5	33.2	5705
High	20.3	14.0	3.8	26.5	6133
Multiple sexual partnerships among men	***	***	***		
Low	24.2	7.9	2.5	26.6	8725
Medium	28.3	19.7	3.7	27.7	4891
High	25.2	28.6	5.9	37.2	4734
Belief in husband-dominated decision making	***	***	**	***	
Low	25.1	22.4	4.0	33.7	5604
Medium	24.5	16.3	4.1	32.4	5462
High	16.5	10.4	3.1	20.6	7284
Inheritance by widows		***	**	**	
Low	23.0	24.3	4.9	33.4	5952
Medium	23.5	13.0	3.4	29.5	5911
High	22.4	14.3	3.1	27.2	6487
Poverty	**	***			
Low	19.6	21.0	3.4	28.6	4983
Medium	24.7	15.1	3.6	31.8	6460
High	24.5	14.0	4.2	28.9	6907
Male unemployment		***	*	***	
Low	23.9	13.9	3.6	28.5	8750
Medium	21.4	13.9	3.0	27.9	4949
High	23.5	23.9	4.7	34.2	4651
Acceptance of wife beating	***	***	***	***	
Low	19.3	12.8	1.7	25.0	5964
Medium	21.8	23.8	5.9	33.1	5668
High	26.5	15.2	4.4	31.2	6718
Total	22.3	16.8	3.7	29.3	18350
*** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05					

Table 2 shows the prevalence of various forms of intimate partner violence by factors that are measured at the community level. Community-level differentials in violence victimization rates are somewhat similar to those observed at the state level with a few exceptions. For example, belief in women's rights to refuse sex at the community level is not associated with physical violence victimization rates. The decline in the violence victimization rates with an increase in community endorsement of husband-dominate decision making raises important questions as to what happens in relationships as societies undergo a transition in women's roles and statuses. It is of interest to see whether some of these patterns remain after controlling for confounding factors in the multi-level analyses.

Table 2. Percentage of currently married women aged 15-49 years who experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months by type of violence and community characteristics, Nigeria 2008

Community Characteristics	Emotional	Physical	Sexual	Any	N
Male residential instability	*	***	*		
Low	24.0	11.5	3.0	28.3	7648
Medium	24.1	17.6	4.3	31.3	5724
High	20.5	22.2	4.1	30.5	4978
Belief in women's rights to refuse sex					
Low	22.1	12.8	3.6	27.7	7142
Medium	22.6	18.6	4.0	30.5	5871
High	22.2	19.9	3.8	29.9	5337
Gender-inequitable attitudes towards sexual activity	**		*		
Low	23.4	15.7	3.0	29.7	6488
Medium	23.7	17.1	4.2	30.6	5759
High	19.6	17.8	4.4	27.6	6103
Multiple sexual partnerships among men		***	***	***	
Low	23.8	8.1	2.6	26.6	8265
Medium	21.9	20.7	4.3	30.2	5504
High	22.9	26.5	5.0	34.9	4581
Belief in husband-dominated decision making	***	***	**	***	
Low	25.0	21.8	4.4	33.9	5180
Medium	23.4	17.1	4.2	30.6	6143
High	18.5	11.5	2.8	23.3	7027
Poverty	**	***			
Low	20.9	18.7	3.5	29.1	7069
Medium	24.4	18.9	4.8	32.6	3619
High	24.7	13.4	3.5	29.4	7662
Male unemployment		***			
Low	23.8	12.8	3.3	28.7	7943
Medium	22.4	17.9	3.6	29.8	5946
High	22.6	20.9	4.5	31.7	4461
Acceptance of wife beating	***	***	***	***	
Low	17.6	13.3	2.3	23.6	5688
Medium	23.9	19.4	3.9	32.5	6243
High	25.9	17.9	5.4	32.3	6419
Total	22.3	16.8	3.7	29.3	18350

*** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05

References

References are available in a separate document upon request.