

DOCTORAL THESIS

Social Development, Couples' Dynamics and Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in Northern and Southern Nigeria

OLA, Bamidele Emmanuel

Date of Award:
2023

[Link to publication](#)

General rights

Copyright and intellectual property rights for the publications made accessible in HKBU Scholars are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners. In addition to the restrictions prescribed by the Copyright Ordinance of Hong Kong, all users and readers must also observe the following terms of use:

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from HKBU Scholars for the purpose of private study or research
- Users cannot further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- To share publications in HKBU Scholars with others, users are welcome to freely distribute the permanent URL assigned to the publication

ABSTRACT

Intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW) is a global social problem that affects women at varying degrees across settings, with more women reporting being victims in the developing countries (36%), especially in Sub-Saharan Africa (44%), than the global average (27%). Consequently, several intervention designs have been introduced to stem the phenomenon, including reducing popular acceptance of IPVAW. However, till date, studies examining whether women have become more or less likely to be victims of IPVAW, and whether attitudes towards IPVAW have improved, are generally scarce. In Nigeria, Africa's most populated country, such studies have yet to be conducted, either at the national level or comparatively across its predominantly *Islamic* and *Sharia-regulated* northern region and its predominantly *Christianized* and more "*liberal*" southern region.

To bridge these knowledge gaps, this doctoral study investigates trends in both IPVAW behaviors and IPVAW attitudes in Nigerian households and among Nigerians at national and regional levels. This thesis consists of three substantive empirical chapters. The first empirical chapter investigates trends in husband-to-wife violence (HWV) between 2008 (earliest national data available) and 2018 (latest national data available), asking how recent changes in household wealth, couples' relative attitudes and income, and husband's alcohol consumption behaviors, have contributed to trends in HWV in Nigerian households. The second chapter asks about trends and factors driving recent changes in IPVAW attitudes. Finally, the third empirical chapter asks about associations between Nigerian local and online media usage and users' attitudes toward IPVAW.

Data from three rounds of comparable, nationally representative surveys, precisely, the Nigeria Demographic and Health Surveys (NDHS) of 2008, 2013, and 2018, involving

19,787 co-resident couples, 103,761 currently-in-union men and women, and 55,132 men and women of all marital statuses, aged 15 to 59 years old, respectively, were analyzed using complementary models including multiple logistic regressions, linear regressions and advanced multivariate decomposition analyses.

The results show that, contrary to expectations, rates of IPVAV have increased in Nigeria from 26% in 2008 to 30.3% in 2018; meanwhile, the rates of IPVAV justification have declined from 49.3% to 31% over the same period (both with regional variations). Extending previous theories such as the *Gender Theory* of IPVAV, this finding presents a novel paradox of “*attitudinal-behavioral dissonance*” where people become *less likely to justify* IPVAV but *more likely to perpetrate* it. Factors associated with the increases in IPVAV behaviors include increases in husbands’ alcohol abuse, wives’ unemployment and higher income, among others. The declines in IPVAV justification were consistent in line with predictions of the *World Society Theory*, although the declines were much slower in northern Nigeria following Boko Haram’s pro-IPVAV insurgent activities in northern Nigeria, consistent with the *Theory of Patriarchal Resistance*. Finally, while Nigeria’s online media is saturated with anti-IPVAV messages, the local media have contributed less to the fight against IPVAV, especially among men.

By implication, more attention should be paid to couples’ relative dynamics and husbands’ characteristics and behaviors beyond mere IPVAV attitudes. In Nigeria, governmental and non-governmental stakeholders should focus more on regional differences and local media contents.