

# **Comparative Analysis of Prevalence and Consistent Correlates of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in Three West African Countries**

## **Abstract**

Intimate Partner Violence Against Women (IPVAW) is a global public health problem with huge social policy implications. While global average of IPVAW experience stands at 35%, IPVAW experiences in Sub-Saharan Africa stands at 37%, next only to Middle East and Southeast Asian regions. However, a quick survey of current literature reveals that very little is known about women's experiences of IPVAW in Africa as the majority of previous IPVAW studies have originated from western, high-income countries, leaving us with questions about their theoretical relevance in low- and middle-income countries (LAMIC) such as those in sub-Saharan Africa. In this study, the author borrows nationally-representative Demographic and Health Surveys of three west African countries, involving a total of 27,306 currently-partnered women aged 15-49 years: Gambia (2013, n=3,232), Nigeria (2013, n=20,152) and Sierra Leone (2013, n=3,922), to report magnitude and consistent correlates of IPVAW in these LAMIC. Data analysis involved preliminary spearman rank correlation and multivariate logistic regression models to comparatively ascertain consistent IPVAW factors across these countries. The result shows that many women still experience different forms of IPVAW in these countries. Lifetime IPVAW experience since age 15 ranged from 23.3% in Nigeria, 24.5% in the Gambia, to 50% in Sierra Leone, while last 12 months IPVAW experience ranged from 12.2% in Gambia, 19.2% in Nigeria, to 34.6% in Sierra Leone. Women witnessing parental violence during childhood and having a husband who manifests controlling behaviours were the most consistent factors significantly exposing women to IPVAW in all countries. However, women having tolerant attitudes towards wife-beating, husband's alcohol consumption and women earning more income than husbands were also positive correlates of IPVAW. The results suggest the need for urgent proactive actions to protect women from IPVAW in these west African countries. Other findings relevant for policy recommendations and interventions are discussed.

**Keyword:** Intimate Partner Violence Against Women, Consistent Correlates, LAMIC, West Africa

## Background Information

Intimate Partner Violence Against Women (IPVAW), defined as “any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship” (World Health Organization [WHO] 2012), has continued to undermine the health, wealth, and general well-being of women globally (Garcia-Moreno et al. 2013). IPV affects at least one-third (about 35%) of all ever-partnered globally (WHO 2017). In sub-Saharan Africa, IPV ranks above the global average at 36.7%, closely behind South East Asia region (37.0%), and Middle East Mediterranean region (37.7%) (WHO 2013). IPVAW often vary by forms – physical, sexual, emotional, financial, social, or a combination of these (WHO 2012).

The consequences of IPVAW have been documented. These include physical, sexual, reproductive and mental health challenges (Campbell 2002). The psychosocial and economic burdens of IPV on individual and national budgets have also been discussed (Ansara, Hindin 2011; Warshaw et al. 2009). For instance, IPVAW could result in victim’s loss of productivity, consequently poor contributions to GDP and overall poor economic development (Corso et al. 2007; Peterson et al. 2018; Duvvury et al. 2013). At the extreme, IPV sometimes results in depression, suicidal thoughts or femicide (Devries et al. 2011; WHO 2017). Recently, the WHO (2017) reported that as at November 2017, about 38% of all female deaths were as a direct result IPVAW perpetrated by their intimate male partners (WHO 2017).

IPVAW has persisted despite several conventions and interventions. The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the United Nations’ 1993 *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, and the 1998 Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children by the Southern Africa Development Community’s (SADC) are a few examples (United Nations Women 2020; Council of Europe 2011; African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights 2020). One major challenge with current interventions are lack of sufficient data and studies with consistent results on IPVAW (Abramsky et al. 2011).

There is currently a huge debate in literature originating from different (mostly high-income) countries on the proximate determinants and risk factors of IPVAW. Apparent inconsistencies in IPVAW literature are attributed to differences in objectives and methodologies employed across studies. This makes comparing IPV findings across studies technically challenging (Abramsky et al. 2011). Another challenge in current IPV literature bothers on the relevance of current IPV theorization which mostly originated from high-income countries (and western cultures) in other economies and cultures, such as those of low- and middle-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Heise 2011; Hardesty, Ogolsky 2020). The attendant questions therefore are: what factors explain women’s experiences of partner-violence in sub-Saharan African countries? To what extent do empirical realities of women in in Sub-Saharan support selected theories of IPV? Finally, how consistent are IPV-factors identified in current literature across countries and cultural boundaries in sub-Saharan Africa? To answer these questions, women’s experiences in three former British west African countries (Nigeria, Gambia, Sierra Leone) will be analyzed.

Theoretically, IPVAW is a multilevel and multifaceted phenomenon (Heise 1998), involving a host of interrelated personal, interpersonal, community-level and larger societal level factors (Heise 1998; Hardesty, Ogolsky 2020). Insights from previous research in the western and developing countries are expansive on the personal and interpersonal level factors (Hardesty, Ogolsky 2020). Personal level factors refer to the individual (man and woman’s) characteristics, while “Interpersonal level factors” refers to family or relationship-specific characteristics. A few

examples of personal level factors identified as predictors of IPVAW include women and men's low literacy or educational levels (WHO 2013; Kwagala et al. 2013), alcohol misuse behaviour (Hindin et al. 2008; Avila-Burgos et al. 2009; Abramsky et al. 2011), supports for patriarchal gender ideologies justifying wife-beating (Johnson, Das 2009; Butchart et al. 2010; Fulu 2016), witnessing parental violence during childhood (Chapple 2003; Abramsky et al. 2011), young age (Abramsky et al. 2011), poverty (Goode 1971), among others. It is believed that men who have low education might justify wife-beating (Rani et al. 2004) and also be more likely to perpetrate it (Uthman et al. 2011). Goode (1971) for instance argued that low-income family men who lack material resources to lure obedience from wife or other family members may resort to violence. For Fulu (2016), gender norms prescribing social inequality and IPV are the main determinants of IPVAW globally.

However, rather than *absolute* resources theory propounded by Goode (1971), Atkinson (2005) has argued that it is the amount of resources *relative* to wife that men control that explains their IPVAW perpetration. Some men are jealous if wife earns higher income and perceive their masculine authority eroding. They therefore employ IPV as an equalizer. This *relative* resource theory of IPVAW found empirical supports in other studies such as Aizer (2010) on gender wage gap, and Neetha (2004) among migrant families in Delhi. Other reported interpersonal (relative) level factors include "age disparity" (Otieno, 2017), "economic burdens and dependence on husband" (Dhungel et al. 2017), and husband controlling behaviour (Abramsky et al. 2011; Antai 2011), among others.

In addition to Goode (1971) and Atkinson (2005) debates already shown above, many other findings are inconsistent and inconclusive, with some yet to be vastly tested in the African context. For instance, the question does women empowerment (economic independence) protect women from IPVAW has gathered several opposing responses. A multi-country study involving 11 countries study by Vyas and Watts (2009) reported that while women economic empowerment protected women from IPVAW in 5 of the countries, it was positively associated in 6. Similarly, while Kwagala et al. (2013) found that women empowerment reduced the odds of women experiencing IPVAW in Uganda, Dalal (2011) found that it increased the risk of IPVAW among working women in India. These differences could have arisen from differences in study methodologies and/or contexts. A single study with uniform methodology and similar data, such as the current study, may be needed to test these theories in the African contexts, but beyond national boundaries.

Another current argument in literature bothers on the role men's alcohol abuse play in women's IPV experiences. Some pro-alcohol-IPVAW scholars have argued that men's alcohol consumption is the most significant predictor of their IPVAW perpetration (Hindin et al. 2008; Avila-Burgos et al. 2009; Solotaroff, Pande 2014). Some scholars believe that the severity of IPVAW perpetrated would increase with levels or frequency of alcohol misuse (Testa et al. 2003). However, other scholars, such as the *deviance disavowal* theorists (See Miller et al. 1997 cited in Galvani 2004: 359) argued that alcohol does not predict IPVAW perpetration in men. To the contrary, abusive men drink alcohol shortly before perpetrating violence only to disavow the blame (that is to shift the blame on the crime on alcohol). The disavowal theory argument therefore orients interrogators to focus on men's personal attitudes towards IPVAW, rather than alcohol. Fulu (2016) therefore argued that men and women's traditional gender ideologies supporting IPVAW is the most fundamental predictor of IPVAW. There is a somewhat consensus however that women (and men) who witnessed violence during childhood (such as if her father beat her mother) were more likely to have experienced it (Abramsky et al. 2011).

For sake of space and concision, the current article focuses on describing and explaining how five most reported factors of IPVAW predict IPVAW in the three selected west African countries. These are (i) witnessing *parental violence* during childhood, (ii) spousal *relative income*, (iii) woman's *attitudes* towards IPVAW, (iv) husband's *alcohol misuse*, and, (v) husband's *controlling behaviours*. Unlike most of the previous studies, the current study employs uniform methodology and similar data and investigates how consistent these factors are in predicting IPVAW in west African countries of Gambia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. Socio-demographic factors such as partner's age, education, household wealth, residence type (urban/rural), religious affiliations and region of residence in the country were controlled for in the same model fitted.

### **Research hypotheses**

From the foregoing, the current study tests the hypotheses that: women's experience of parental violence during childhood, tolerant attitudes towards IPVAW, earning less income compared to husband, having a husband who controls her, or a husband who drinks alcohol will each consistently predict increase occurrence of experiencing IPVAW from husband in each selected west African country.

### **Methodology**

#### ***Data and Sample Size***

The study employed the domestic violence module of the nationally representative, cross-sectional, household-based demographic and health survey (DHS) data of the Gambia (2013 GDHS), Nigeria (2013 NDHS) and Sierra Leone (2013 SLDHS). DHS sample selection procedures usually involve a multi-stage cluster or stratified sampling procedures, modelled after national population census sampling frames. The samples for the DHS domestic violence modules are usually only women, aged 15-49 years old, one selected per eligible household. Data on women's experiences of partnered and non-partnered violence with the last twelve months (12 months IPV) and since age 15 (lifetime IPV) are usually collected by "well-trained" research assistants using internationally standardized questionnaires. Domestic violence [DV] episodes are measured using the Conflict Tactics Scale of Strauss (1979). To protect participants from potential backlash from abusive male partners for reporting violence, in consonance with the WHO's (2001) recommendation, only one woman is selected per household. Privacy during interviews are mandatorily and ensured – interviews are either suspended or discontinued when compromised. The samples analyzed in the current study involved a total of 27,306 currently-in-union women aged 15 to 49 years old – the Gambia (3,232), Nigeria (20,152), and Sierra Leone (3,922).

#### ***Data analysis: Measurement, variables coding and regression models***

##### **Dependent variable**

The dependent variable is woman's experience of partner-violence (IPVAW) within the last 12 months preceding the survey. Any experience of *physical* (e.g. slapping, kicking, strangulation, burning), *sexual* (e.g. forced sexual acts), or *emotional* (e.g. threats to harm or actual public humiliation) **violence** from husband or an intimate male partner was coded to "1", experiencing None is coded to "0". Multivariate logistic regression models were fitted on the binary outcomes.

##### **Independent variables**

The key independent variables of interest are: (i) *Witnessing parental violence* (that is, if woman's father beat her mother; *Never*=0, *Yes*=1, *Don't know*=2); (ii) *Tolerant attitude towards IPV*: A woman is coded "1" if she agrees at least once that a man could beat his wife if she – "goes out without telling him", "neglects the children", "argues with him", "refuses to have sex

with him”, or “burns the food”; that is, violating some traditional gender norms. A woman who disagrees with wife-beating in all scenarios is coded as “0” (zero tolerance); (iii) ***Woman’s relative income compared to husband’s***: Woman is coded as “0” if she earns “less than husband”, “1” if “about same as him”, “2” if “more than him”, and “3” if woman is uncertain or missing; see Aizer, 2010; Abramsky, et al., 2011). Full-time housewives and non-working women were grouped with those who earned less; (iv) ***Husband controlling behaviour***: Controlling behaviour involves if husband is – *jealous woman talks to other men, always accuses her of unfaithfulness, does not allow her to meet her female friends, is always willing to know where she is, (and/or), tries to limit her contact with her family*. Amount of controls are ranked from None=0, One=1 control, Two=2 controls, Three or more= 3 or more controls); and, (v) ***Husband alcohol consumption*** (Yes=1, Never=0). Frequency of alcohol could not be measured as very few men drank alcohol in the Gambia.

**Other control variables** include *age*, education, household wealth, region, religion, residence (rural or urban), relative age, relative education, and occupational status. (The results of the control variables are not shown due to space limitation and to focus on the key independent variables).

## Results

### Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Basic descriptive background information on the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents are provided here. As expected, more men were older than their wives. The mean age (in years) of the women (W) and Husbands (H) were Gambia (W=30.2; H=42.7), Nigeria (W=31.0, H=41.1), and Sierra Leone (W=31.9, H=41.9). In all the countries, more samples were from the rural (R) areas: Gambia (R=51.2%), Nigeria (R=63.2%), Sierra Leone (R=71.7%). The majority of the women have had “no [formal] education” (Gambia=61.3%, Nigeria=47.6%, Sierra Leone=73.4%); those with only primary education (Gambia=13.7%, Nigeria=19.3%, Sierra Leone=13.1%), secondary (Gambia=20.8%, Nigeria=25.6%, Sierra Leone=12.0%), and higher (Gambia=4.2%, Nigeria=7.5%, Sierra Leone=1.5%). Majority of the women were currently married (Gambia=99.5%; Nigeria=97.2%; Sierra Leone=95.8), only few were cohabitating (Gambia=0.6%; Nigeria=2.8%; Sierra Leone=4.2%). The widowed, divorced or separated in the larger samples were excluded from the current study to account for only last 12 months IPVAV experience. Notwithstanding, among these currently-in-union women, experiences of marital dissolution, remarriage and polygyny were common. One-tenth of the women in Nigeria (10.4%) and the Gambia (11.5%), and more than one-fifth (20.9%) in Sierra Leone were not in their first marriage. About one-third of the women in each country were in polygynous relationships: Nigeria (32.1%), Sierra Leone (32.8%), and the Gambia (36.6%).

Although slightly higher than the women’s, a large proportion of the men had low educational qualifications: more than half of the men in the Gambia (57.0%) and Sierra Leone (73.4%), and a little less than half in Nigeria (39.1%), have had “No [formal] education”. Only a few men have had either a secondary education (Nigeria=25.6%; Gambia=20.8%; Sierra Leone=12.0%) or higher (Nigeria=7.5%; Gambia=4.2%; Sierra Leone=1.5%).

### Prevalence of key variables in the study

With the exception of Nigerian women, the majority of the women still supported wife-beating for at least one reason: from more than two-thirds in Sierra Leone (69.2%) and the Gambia (67%), down to less than half in Nigeria (38.3%). Witnessing parental violence as a child was commonly reported: highest in Sierra Leone (29.5%), next by the Gambia (9.4%), and lowest in Nigeria

(8.2%). However, alcohol consumption was most common among Nigerian men (17.4%), than Sierra Leone (15.7%) and the Gambia (1.1%). More than half of the women reported several husband controlling behaviours: Gambia (50.2%), Nigeria (64.2%) and Sierra Leone (79.3%). Among the women who are employed and earn cash income, the majority earn less than the husband: Gambia (92.3%), Nigeria (91.3%) and Sierra Leone (92.0%). However, a few also earned more than their husbands: with Sierra Leonean women as the highest (4.6%), next by Gambian (4.0%), and Nigerian (4.4%) women. Very few women earn about same as husband: Sierra Leone (2.3%), Nigeria (3.6%) and the Gambia (1.8%).

### **Last Twelve Months Experiences of IPVAV**

Women reported high frequencies of various forms of IPVAV experienced within the last 12 months preceding survey. IPVAV experiences by type of violence are as follows: *physical* (Sierra Leone=27.7%; Nigeria=9.1%; Gambia=6.4%), *emotional* (Sierra Leone=21.0%; Nigeria=15.6%; Gambia=8.2%), and *sexual* (Sierra Leone 5.5%; Nigeria=3.6%; Gambia=1.1%). Experiencing any of physical, sexual or emotional violence therefore ranged from more than one-third (34.6%) in Sierra Leone (34.6%) to about one-fifth (19.2%) in Nigeria and above one-tenth (12.2%) in the Gambia. Physical violence topped the list of type of IPVAV experienced in Sierra Leone, while in Nigeria and the Gambia, women were more likely to report experiencing emotional violence.

### **Results of the Multivariate Logistic Regression Analyses**

Table 1 presents abridged data on odds ratios [ORs] and adjusted odds ratios [aORs] of women's experiences of wife-beating in each country. The odds ratios refer to result from simple (one variable) logistic regression model; the adjusted odds ratios refer to result from all key variables and control variables fitted into the second model. The results for other control variables are not presented in the table for space limit. [Table 2 in the annex shows results of preliminary bivariate spearman rank correlation conducted]. The relationship between IPVAV experiences and each key independent variable is presented in subsections below.

#### **Witnessing Parental Violence During Childhood and Experiencing IPVAV in adulthood**

The study [Table 1] provides consistent evidence that women who experienced parental violence during childhood were significantly more likely to experience violence from their own husband during adulthood across all the countries. The adjusted odds ratios [aORs] and confidence intervals are as follows: Nigeria (aOR 2.2, CI 1.8-2.6,  $p < 0.001$ ), Sierra Leone (aOR 2.2, CI 1.8-2.8), and the Gambia (aOR 2.5, CI 1.6-4.0,  $p < 0.001$ ). Witnessing parental violence significantly increased the likelihood of experience IPVAV in adulthood by about 120% to 150%.

#### **Woman's justification of wife-beating and Experiencing IPVAV**

With the exclusion of Sierra Leonean women, women who justified wife-beating (IPVAV) for at least one reason were about 40% (aOR 1.40, CI 1.3-1.6 – Nigeria) to 100% (aOR 2.0, CI 1.3-3.1 – Gambia) significantly more likely to experience it, compared to women who did not justify it. Although this does not mean that women demanded IPVAV because they justified it, rather the result seems to indicate that having tolerant attitudes towards IPVAV, especially supporting wife-beating and blaming IPV victim for violating certain gender roles, may prevent women from seeking redress when they experience abuse in their own lives. In Sierra Leone, the relationship was not significant even in the simple logistic regression model.

**Table 1. Reporting multivariate logistic regression of 12 months IPVAW (with bivariate chi-square frequency, [n (%)]**

Models	n (%)			Adjusted odds ratios (aORs)		
Independent variables	Gambia	Nigeria	Sierra Leone	Gambia	Nigeria	Sierra Leone
<b>Father ever beat her mother:</b>						
No (Ref.)	252 (10.8)	541 (27.8)	2679 (16.5)	1	1	1
Yes	64 (23.1)	507 (46.7)	673 (43.3)	[1-1] 2.5*** (1.6 - 4.0)	[1-1] 2.2*** (1.8 - 2.6)	[1-1] 2.2*** (1.8 - 2.8)
Don't know	44 (13.0) $X^2: 48^*$	224 (33.8) $X^2: 133^*$	307 (24.2) $X^2: 763^*$	1.1 (0.7 - 1.8)	1.4** (1.1 - 1.6)	1.3 (1.0 - 1.6)
<b>Woman justified IPVAW:</b>						
No (R.C.)	94 (8.5)	359 (31.6)	1841 (15.6)	1	1	1
Yes	265 (14.4) $X^2: 34^*$	914 (35.9) $X^2: 11^*$	1818 (24.8) $X^2: 232^*$	[1-1] 2.0** (1.3 - 3.1)	[1-1] 1.4*** (1.3 - 1.6)	[1-1] 1 (0.8 - 1.3)
<b>Relative income:</b>						
Woman earn less (R.C.)	330(12.1)	1171 (34.6)	3286 (18.9)	1	1	1
Earns about same	4 (8.2)	29 (34.6)	122 (17.9)	[1-1] 0.7 (0.2 - 2.2)	[1-1] 0.8* (0.6 - 1.0)	[1-1] 1.2 (0.6 - 2.4)
More than him	14 (11.4) $X^2: 3$	11 (27.2) $X^2: 3$	194 (30.4) $X^2: 38^*$	0.9 (0.5 - 1.7)	1.5** (1.1 - 1.9)	0.9 (0.6 - 1.5)
<b>Husband controlling behaviour:</b>						
None (0)	73 (4.9)	115 (15.1)	527 (7.7)	1	1	1
Low control (1)	123 (15.5)	138 (23.9)	785 (15.2)	[1-1] 3.4*** (2.3 - 5.0)	[1-1] 2.6*** (2.2 - 3.1)	[1-1] 1.9*** (1.3 - 2.6)
Moderate (2)	74 (17.0)	317 (34.6)	1121 (23.7)	3.9*** (2.4 - 6.6)	4.5*** (3.8 - 5.3)	3.1*** (2.3 - 4.1)
High control (3/more)	90 (35.7) $X^2: 274^*$	701 (49.3) $X^2: 288^*$	1227 (52.3) $X^2: 2500^*$	10.1*** (6.7 - 15.3)	11.5*** (9.7 - 13.8)	5.7*** (4.3 - 7.5)
<b>Husband drinks alcohol:</b>						
No (R.C.)	350 (12.0)	1010 (32.5)	2387 (15.1)	1	1	1
Yes	9 (28.4) $X^2: 8^*$	263 (45.5) $X^2: 47^*$	1273 (38.3) $X^2: 901^*$	[1-1] 3 (0.5 - 17.1)	[1-1] 1.9*** (1.7 - 2.2)	[1-1] 1.6*** (1.3 - 2.1)
<b>Observations</b>	3,232	20,152	3,922	3,228	20,152	3,922

**Notes:** R.C.= Referent category; Confidence intervals in parentheses; \*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05;  $X^2$ : chi-square; Adjusted odds ratios (aORs) reports estimates for multiple logistic regression odds ratios

### Relative Income and Experiencing IPVAW

Women's income relative to husband's did not predict statistically significant relationship in two out of the three countries. Only in Nigeria, earning more than husband predicted increased risks of experiencing IPVAW from him, while, earning about same as him provided some protections. In Nigeria, compared to women who earn less than husband, women who earned about same income as their husband were about 20% (aOR 0.8, CI 0.6-1.0,  $p < 0.05$ ) less likely, and those who earn more were about 50% (aOR 1.5, CI 1.1-1.9,  $p < 0.01$ ) more likely to experience violence from him. However, the large confidence interval of women who *earn about same as husband* extending to 1.0 thus suggest the finding of this women category be taken with caution.

### Husband controlling behaviour and Experiencing IPVAW

Consistently across all the countries, women whose husbands manifest controlling behaviours such as being jealous if woman talks to other men, always accusing her of unfaithfulness, not allowing her to meet her female friends and always willing to know where she is, were, at least, about 90% (Sierra Leone) to 240% (Gambia) significantly more likely to experience actual instances of violence from him, compared to women whose husband never manifest any controlling behaviour. The propensity of a woman experiencing IPVAW from increased with the number of controls husband manifests. For instance, men who manifest at least

3 controls (high) were about 470% (aOR 5.7, CI 4.3-7.5,  $p < 0.001$  – Sierra Leone) to 1,050% (aOR 11.5, CI 9.7-13.8,  $p < 0.001$  – Nigeria) more likely to perpetrate IPVAW; in the Gambia, such men were about 910% (aOR 10.1, CI 6.7-15.3,  $p < 0.001$ ) more likely, compared to men who never manifest any controlling behaviours.

### **Husband Alcohol Consumption and Experiencing IPVAW**

Without controlling for other covariates, women whose husband drinks alcohol were about 70% to 250% more likely to experience IPVAW from him compared to women whose husband does not. However, after controlling for other variables, alcohol failed to be significant in the Gambia where, as explained early, only a few men drink alcohol. In Sierra Leone (aOR 1.6, CI 1.3-2.1,  $p < 0.001$ ) and Nigeria (aOR 1.9, CI 1.7-2.2,  $p < 0.001$ ), men who drink alcohol were about 60% and 90% more likely to perpetrate IPVAW.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The current study examined the magnitude and consistent correlates of male-partner perpetrated IPVAW in three west African countries (Gambia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone), to supplement sparse report on IPVAW in the African contexts. The data revealed that women's experience of any form of physical, sexual or emotional IPVAW in the last 12 months preceding survey ranged from 12.2% in Gambia, 19.2% in Nigeria, to 34.6% in Sierra Leone. Experiences of physical (6.4%, 9.1%, 27.7%), sexual (1.1%, 3.6%, 5.5%) and emotional (8.5%, 15.6%, 21.0%) violence were reported by women, respectively by country.

Among the most consistently reported covariates of IPVAW reported in the previous studies reviewed, and tested in this study, *witnessing parental violence* during childhood, and *husband controlling behaviour* were the most consistent factors of IPV across the studied countries. Having a husband who consumes alcohol, women earning about same as husband and women tolerating IPVAW are also positively associated with IPVAW experience.

Common explanations to why women who witnessed parental violence during childhood eventually experience it themselves in their own relationship during adulthood (transgenerational IPVAW) may be because women witnessed parental violence are also more likely to *normalize*, justify and tolerate it (see Uthman et al. 2011). Using a multilevel structural equation modelling, Uthman et al. (2011) found that 'women that witnessed physical violence were more likely to have tolerant attitudes towards IPVAW and women with tolerant attitudes were more likely to have reported spousal IPVAW abuse' (Uthman et al. 2011).

Again, the finding that women whose husband manifest controlling behaviours such as getting jealous when woman talks to other men or limit her movements were more likely to actually perpetrate IPVAW against her is consistent with findings in Antai (2011) where controlling behaviour is associated with masculine patriarchal gender power manifestation in gender relations and a precursor to partner-violence among Nigerian men. This study shows that controlling behaviour and IPVAW are strong correlates in the study African contexts in this study.

Husband's alcohol consumption (Abramsky et al. 2011) behaviour and wife's tolerant attitudes towards wife-beating were also covariates of IPVAW, but not consistent across countries. Alcohol failed to predict IPVAW only in the Gambia. This might be because very few men drink alcohol among the Gambian (mostly Muslim) men (only 1.1% drank any alcohol). However, in Sierra Leone and Nigeria where alcohol consumption was common among the men, alcohol was significantly positively associated with IPVAW.

Similarly, relative income was only significant in the Nigerian context, such that women who earn about same as husband were less likely to experience IPVAW, whereas those who earned



more than husband were exposed to greater risks of IPVAW, compared to women who earn less than him. The Nigerian context supports Atkinson's (2005) relative resource theory in which status compatibility in income (gender equality) protected women while earning more than husband posed greater risks of IPVAW to women. As earlier explained, men might feel their masculine authority threatened if women earned more and resort to violence as power equalizer.

### **Social Policy Implications and Recommendations for Interventions**

The social policy implications for the findings of this study are numerous and hereby discussed below. First, given that parental violence and husband controlling behaviours emerged the most consistent predictors of women IPV victimization, the following recommendations are worth considering:

- Mass media broadcast of the implications of children witnessing parental violence (intergenerational transmission of violence) should be made public, subjected to public or community discussions, and outrightly condemned. Similarly, various media (including the social media) apparatuses should be employed to discourage attitudes tolerating any form of partner violence or violence against women at large.
- National child right laws prohibiting parental or elderly acts of violence before children either in real time or on the media should be promulgated and enshrined in all policies meant to protect children's rights and interests. A good example of such is the [Nigerian] Child Right Acts of 2003, which though in Part III of its provisions orders the protection of children from sexual violence, child marriage or child labour, but made no provisions for their necessary protection from witnessing parental or elderly violence in the household. Such childhood experiences as shown in this study could negatively influence children's attitudes toward tolerating violence or experiencing it in their own lives during adulthood. Consequently, this study specifically calls for the inclusion of "no-child-present parental violence" clause in any review of the Nigerian Child's Rights Act 2003, and similar Acts promulgated in the Gambia and Sierra Leone.
- Mass reorientation is needed to prevent and discourage men from treating the women in their lives as "property" or "pets" that could be controlled or ordered around. School curriculum, vignettes on national news media (prints or electronic) should be employed in the mass reorientation program. Women are not property but equal partners (help-meet) as men, in both private and public lives.
- Social workers and social policies protecting children and providing real life social supports for children in abusive homes, or homes riddled with parental violence should be made available. Such policies and programs should be empowered to include potentialities for child state adoption services, especially in cases of violent parent(s).

Secondly, given that alcohol predicted increased violence in two out of the three countries studied, the following control measures of alcohol production, distribution, exchange and consumption particularly in relation to preventing IPV victimization of women could be helpful:

- Alcohol disavowal inclination should be criminalized such that alcohol consumption will no longer be an acceptable excuse for perpetration of IPV against women. All perpetrators should be held accountable and punishable by law.
- Increasing prices of alcoholic products, age of consumers and reducing quantities imported or produced locally could be a step in the right direction. More proactively, the consumption level of partnered men may be restricted by local laws.

Finally, given that in Nigeria, earning “about same” income as husband/partner significantly returned some protections for partnered-women, compared to their counterparts who either earn less or more than husband/partner, the following social policy implications are potentially important:

- In addition to mass gender value reorientation already mentioned, more women should be given equal employment opportunities and equal remuneration at the workplace as men, given they have similar qualifications. Equality in income can add to the continued demystification of male superiority and female inferiority at the workplace.
- Similarly in Nigeria, the result that women who earned “more than” husband/partner were significantly more likely to experience violence from him compared to women who earned “less than him” offered supports for the *backlash* hypothesis (Atkinson, Greenstein, & Lang, 2005; Neetha, 2004). Thus, social policy centered on women empowerment should also ipso facto include men’s anti-violence orientation campaigns. That way, more male partners might have more favourable attitudes towards female employment or higher income than they.

Arguably, more social policy implications are derivable from the findings and contexts of the current study than those here-mentioned. Interested stakeholders related to each county studied can also review the current study and suggest further recommendations deemed suitable to the sociocultural contexts of their interests.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW) is common in west Africa – more frequent in relationships where husband manifest controlling behaviour, drink alcohol and where women experience violence during childhood, justifies wife-beating and earn more than husbands. These findings suggest the need for proactive measures (discussed above as “social policy implications”) to combat IPVAW such as sensitization of both sexes against IPVAW justification, socially promote egalitarian gender norms, promulgate policies against IPVAW and protect vulnerable women from IPVAW in the study settings.

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## Appendix

Table 2. Spearman rank correlation of IPVAW by key variables in Gambia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone

IPV victimization against women	Gambia	Sierra Leone	Nigeria
<b>Key variables:</b>			
Woman's IPV acceptance	0.0746*	0.1044*	0.0613*
Husband controlling behaviour	0.1940*	0.2651*	0.2535*

Parental violence	0.1177*	0.1702*	0.1393*
Husband alcohol misuse	0.0239	0.0712*	0.1927*
<b>Age and Education:</b>			
Woman's age group	-0.0726*	-0.1566*	-0.0469*
Husband's age group	-0.0618*	-0.1531*	-0.0681*
Woman's education	0.0274	0.0224	0.0532*
Husband's education	0.0058	-0.0036	0.0491*
<b>Relative resources:</b>			
Relative education	0.021	-0.0117	-0.0194*
Relative age	-0.0188	-0.0075	0.0356*
Relative Income	-0.0187	-0.0421	0.0115
<b>Household contexts:</b>			
Marital status	0.0187	-0.013	0.0557*
Household wealth index	0.0253	0.0498	0.0099
Number of marriages (woman)	0.0295	-0.1054*	0.0425*
Polygyny	-0.0177	0.0108	0.0168
Number of children (plus pregnancy)	-0.0065	-0.0607*	0.011
Desire for Children	-0.0239	-0.0206	0.0368*
Desire for more children	-0.0169	-0.0488	0.0212*
<b>Woman's participation in decision-making:</b>			
Decision to spend her earnings	0.0302	-0.005	0.0770*
Decision to spend husband's earnings	-0.0520*	0.0284	-0.0208*
Decision on woman's healthcare	0.0563*	0.0832*	-0.0634*
Decision on large purchases	0.0656*	0.0436	-0.0484*
<i>Notes: * <math>p &lt; 0.05</math></i>			