

## **Gender Role Ideologies and Prevalence of Violence Against Women in Imo State, Nigeria**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In patriarchal societies, gender relations are defined by segregation of roles between husbands and wives, and in general, between men and women. Violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relation between men and women, which has led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of all women. It derives essentially from cultural patterns that perpetuate the lower status accorded to women in the family and society at large. Though a universal phenomenon, its patterns and concerns can be fully understood and remedied only in specific socio-cultural context. At the root of violence against women lie unequal power relations and unequal control over resources between women and men. Power dynamics strongly influence or constrain women's ability to exercise constraint in their own lives including choices that would enable them to resist abuse. Societal norms about gender relations often reinforce this lack of choice. Women's unequal status- perpetuated by formal legal systems and informal traditions- currently gives them little negotiating power in reproductive health issues (Heise et al., 1995; Odimegwu, 1997; Okemgbo, 2000; Okafor et al., 1994, Beijing, 1995).

Social and cultural factors intrinsically exert influence on the way of life in a society, which impact on the women. In Nigeria, women are brought up in an atmosphere where they are expected to obey established social norms such as how they should view and orient themselves and what kind of attitude they should take on various occasions. For example, in Imo State, just like in other patriarchal societies, women are regarded as nothing more than appendages to their husbands. They lack right to ownership of properties, face certain inhumane traditional practices harmful to their health such as female genital mutilation and widowhood rituals which young widows are compelled to undergo as part of mourning their dead husbands. If a woman does

not follow such rules, society judges that she is not a good woman and violence is entrenched against her.

Among the Igbo of Imo State just like women in other patriarchal societies, the subordinate position which women are subjected to predisposes them to various acts of gender-based violence. For instance, women do not have and cannot hold title to land which is an exclusive preserve of male and is in turn inherited by the male children in the family. Also being a patriarchal society, male dominance is reflected in the marriage institution. Female children are expected to marry from the time they started menstruating and have no choice with respect to the men they married. In some cases promissory marriage, whereby a family promises its new-born (or yet to be born) daughter, to another family which formally proposes marriage is also practised.

The Igbo socio-cultural environment degrades the womanhood and exposes them to the control of the men. The family authority structure clearly favours the men who take the major decisions affecting the household without reference to the women. In situations where women are influential, the husbands of such will be held with contempt. The women have no influence and have no control over economic resources, a situation which has wasted the potentials in them and thus bring about a decline in the economic resources available to the family. Furthermore, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action notes that though women contribute to development through paid as well as unpaid work, their unpaid work, such as domestic and community work, is not measured in quantitative terms and not valued in national accounts (Beijing, 1995). Thus the socio-cultural dynamics of the Igbo expose the women to lots of abuse and exploitation by their men folk.

Most of the abuses that women suffer are as a result of their sex. For instance, gender role ideology stresses that the man is the head of the woman, not only because he paid a dowry to own her, but because God has made him superior to the woman. Sequel to this idiosyncrasy, the man

employs force whenever it comes to resolving conflict in the home. The lot of the woman is to keep quiet in order not to be further maltreated. Thus as long as men are given the right to control women's behaviours and use violence as an acceptable way of exerting power, violence is perpetuated against them. Apart from this, abuse of women is a general phenomenon affecting women irrespective of their age, status, religion or educational level. Educated women as well as illiterates, employed or unemployed, all face the same problem of abuse due to these socio-economic/demographic characteristics. This paper examines the role of gender ideology in promoting violence against women.

### METHODOLOGY

The population of study is a sample of adult women aged 15-49 in two locations in Imo State viz: Orlu and Owerri areas. Two local government areas in Orlu Area, viz: Orsu and Oru formed the rural location. Both areas are typical rural areas with little or no infrastructural facilities, and were granted local government status in 1991. The population of the areas by the projection of 1991 census are 91,085 and 148,966 respectively (NPC, 1991). One community each was selected from the two areas to form the rural communities. For the urban area, Owerri, the capital city of Imo State was chosen. Owerri has all the indices of urban centre; good road networks, educational institutions (all levels), administrative structures, banking and financial institutions etc. Owerri has an estimated population figure of 284,931 by the 1991 census (NPC, 1991). In these two survey areas, the major ethnic group is the Igbo (Ibo). This group forms about 17% of the Nigerian population by ethnicity (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1987). In terms of social structure, the Igbo family is based on a network of mutual obligation.

A total of 308 women chosen by a probability sampling technique responded to the questionnaire interview in the survey. The sampling design used in this study was the multi-stage cluster sampling technique. In the rural area the Primary Health Care Unit's demarcation of wards represented different clusters of housing units. In the first stage a cluster was randomly selected from the available clusters of housing units. In the selected cluster, the village names were written down after which four villages were randomly selected. All the housing units in the villages were

assigned definite numbers and using a table of random numbers, 50 housing units were selected in each selected village.

In the Urban centre, one unit from the Primary Health Care demarcation of wards was first selected by random sampling technique to form the cluster. In the second stage, the major streets in the cluster were identified out of which 5 streets were randomly selected. The housing units in these streets were then listed in order. In each street, 30 housing units were selected using a systematic random sampling technique. Since the number of housing units in each selected street is not the same, we divided the number of housing units in the street by our desired number of housing units after which the sampling factor obtained was used to select the 30 housing units in each of the streets.

In each housing unit selected, one household was selected using lottery method of random sampling technique, depending on the number of households in the unit. Where there was only one eligible respondent in the selected household, the respondent automatically qualified for the interview. However, if there was no eligible respondent in the selected household, the next household was selected from the street. This pattern was followed until the required number of respondents were derived. In both the rural and urban areas, only one eligible female respondent was picked in each selected house-hold. In a situation where there were more than one eligible respondent in the household, the lottery method was used to select the respondent that was interviewed.

For this study, questionnaire and focus group discussion were used. Data were edited on the spot and entered into the computer using the EPI Info version 6 programme for data entry. Subsequent analyses were done using SPSS PC+ Version 4.

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### Socioeconomic Characteristics of Respondents

Of the 308 respondents, 3.3% were 15-24 years old, 20.4% 25-34 years, 43.2% 35-44 years and 33.1% 45 and above years. There is no much rural-urban differential.

In terms of educational attainment, while 6.8% of the respondents have no formal education, half of the women attended primary and secondary

schools and one-third of the respondents attended higher institutions. Trading seems to be the major occupation of the women than other types of

**Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondents by socioeconomic characteristics, Imo state, 2003.**

| Characteristic                                                  | Urban      | Rural      | Total      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <i>Age Group</i>                                                |            |            |            |
| 15-24                                                           | 2.7 (4)    | 3.8 (6)    | 3.3 (10)   |
| 25-34                                                           | 20.0 (30)  | 20.9 (33)  | 20.4 (63)  |
| 35-44                                                           | 44.0 (66)  | 42.4 (67)  | 43.2 (133) |
| 45+                                                             | 33.3 (50)  | 32.9 (52)  | 33.1 (102) |
| <i>Educational Level</i>                                        |            |            |            |
| None                                                            | 4.0 (6)    | 9.5 (15)   | 6.8 (21)   |
| Primary                                                         | 30.0 (45)  | 31.6 (50)  | 30.8 (95)  |
| Secondary                                                       | 33.3 (50)  | 29.7 (47)  | 31.5 (97)  |
| TTC/NCE                                                         | 20.7 (31)  | 25.3 (40)  | 23.1 (71)  |
| Poly/University                                                 | 12.0 (18)  | 3.9 (6)    | 7.8 (24)   |
| <i>Occupation</i>                                               |            |            |            |
| Farming                                                         | 2.0 (3)    | 5.7 (9)    | 4.1 (12)   |
| Artisan                                                         | 2.0 (3)    | 9.5 (15)   | 5.9 (18)   |
| Trading                                                         | 61.3 (92)  | 38.0 (60)  | 50.2 (152) |
| Housewife                                                       | 6.7 (10)   | 4.4 (7)    | 5.6 (17)   |
| Civil servant                                                   | 23.3 (35)  | 37.3 (59)  | 30.5 (94)  |
| Professional<br>(e.g. Accountants,<br>Lawyers,<br>Bankers etc.) | 4.7 (7)    | 5.1 (8)    | 4.9 (15)   |
| <i>Marital Status</i>                                           |            |            |            |
| Married                                                         | 76.0 (114) | 89.9 (142) | 83.1 (256) |
| Widowed                                                         | 21.3 (32)  | 8.9 (14)   | 14.9 (46)  |
| Divorced/<br>Separated                                          | 2.7 (4)    | 1.2 (2)    | 1.9 (6)    |
| <i>Family Structure</i>                                         |            |            |            |
| Monogamy                                                        | 74.0 (111) | 83.5 (132) | 78.9 (243) |
| Polygynous                                                      | 26.0 (39)  | 16.5 (26)  | 21.1 (65)  |
| <i>Religion</i>                                                 |            |            |            |
| Traditional                                                     | 1.3 (2)    | 6.0 (9)    | 3.6 (11)   |
| Catholic                                                        |            |            |            |
| Christians                                                      | 27.3 (41)  | 69.0 (109) | 48.7 (150) |
| Orthodox                                                        |            |            |            |
| Christians                                                      | 40.7 (61)  | 19.0 (30)  | 29.5 (91)  |
| Pentecostal                                                     |            |            |            |
| Christians                                                      | 28.0 (42)  | 4.0 (6)    | 15.6 (48)  |
| Others                                                          | 2.7 (4)    | 2.0 (4)    | 2.6 (8)    |

occupation listed. Virtually all of them are in marital union and most of them have lived for more than two decades with their husbands. On the religious affiliation of the respondents, most of the respondents are from the Roman Catholic religion.

The proportion of the respondents, partners not having any formal education is 3.9% while more than half of the men have at least a secondary educational training. About 40.2% of them attended post-secondary institutions. For their occupations, there are more traders and civil servants than other occupations.

## Male-Female Relations

To assess the husband-wife relationship, questions were asked in order to ascertain the level of relationship between the respondents and their husbands. Table 2 shows the level of male-female relations.

Table 2 shows that there seems to be a cordial relationship between the respondents and their husbands with respect to some levels of interaction. About nine out of every 10 women interviewed confides in their partners due particularly to some level of mutual trust existing between them. The 10.0% of those interviewed reported that they cannot confide in their husbands because they are wicked and difficult to be trusted. Also 67.4% of the respondents pool resources together with their husbands. Their reasons for joint account include love, oneness, mutual problem solving, understanding, developing family and for peace and harmony. Those that do not pool resources together (32.6%) indicated that their husbands have other women, there is no trust between them and because it is the husband's decision for them to control their individual resources.

Again 9 out of every 10 women surveyed took part in how their personal incomes are used. Their reasons include;

- \* It is mine
- \* To avoid misuse
- \* Joint decision-making in the family
- \* For family upkeep
- \* Husband is my head
- \* Mutual trust
- \* To train children.

In terms of rural-urban comparison, higher proportion of the respondents in the urban area participate actively in how their personal incomes are spent than those in the rural area. Some women agreed that they are being allowed to own landed property. The ratio of those that agree to those that disagreed is about 2:1. The respondents were not asked to state the reasons for agreeing but those that reported that women are forbidden from owning landed property indicated that they are forbidden because of the following: woman's property belong to the man, women are strangers in their homes, and mostly tradition of Igbos prohibits women's ownership of landed property. Despite the fact that 68.8% reported that they are allowed to own landed property, only 31.4% of them are able to own landed property basically

because they bought it with their own money. However, in Igboland, a woman claiming to have bought land did so either in her husband's name or in her son's name and not in her own name—which further confirms the position of women in a patriarchal society. In fact, a woman does not own a landed property in Igboland except in her husband's or son's name. The bulk of them that could not afford it stated that:

- \* My property belongs to my husband
- \* I used it to care for our children
- \* It is not necessary to own one
- \* No money to acquire one
- \* Tradition forbids it.

When these reasons for not acquiring a landed property are contrasted with the reasons why women are not allowed to own landed property, one discovers that some of these reasons are contradictory. If tradition forbade the women from owning landed property in the first place, then affirmative response on whether women are allowed to own landed property becomes a misnomer, which tends to conclude that tradition actually forbids women owning landed property.

On whether men ever denied the respondents what is their right, one-quarter of them reported that their husbands have denied their rights. About 86.0% claimed to have access to what belongs to them but the level of freedom to their assets was checked by asking the women to indicate if they have right to dispose their property without the permission of their husbands. To this, 78.4% of them reported that they do not have the right to dispose of their personal property without the permission of their husbands. This then shows that majority of the women live under the direct tutelage of their husbands: having no authority to do with their own personal property what they choose to unless their husbands permit it. This corroborates the assertion that unequal power relations and control of resources reinforce lack of choice to the women and as has been stated by Albert (1996), women are perceived to be nothing but men's property.

Furthermore, Table 2 clearly shows that every major decision making in the family favours the man. Such household decision making as children's healthcare, children's education, fostering children, children's marriage, benevolence to relatives, number of children to have, amount of money for family spending, when to enjoy sexual pleasure and time to have another child are all controlled by the men. Women only champion

decision on what to cook because it is regarded traditionally as women's role in the household, reflecting so much the saying those women's *education's end in the kitchen*.

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents by male-female relationship.**

| Characteristics                                                             | Urban      | Rural      | Total      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Mutual confiding in each other                                              | 84.0 (121) | 94.7 (142) | 89.5(263)  |
| Do you pool resources together?                                             | 47.6 (69)  | 84.8 (134) | 67.4(203)  |
| Do you take part in how your personal income is used                        | 96.5 (137) | 85.8(133)  | 90.9(270)  |
| Are women allowed to own landed property                                    | 70.1 (103) | 85.6 (83)  | 68.8(186)  |
| Personally own landed property                                              | 15.0 (22)  | 59.9 (87)  | 36.2(109)  |
| Has partner denied you your right                                           | 18.6 (27)  | 7.8 (13)   | 13.3 (40)  |
| Do you have right to dispose off your property without husband's permission | 22.5 (32)  | 18.4 (27)  | 19.9 (59)  |
| <i>Household Decisionmaking</i>                                             |            |            |            |
| <i>Who has final say on What to cook</i>                                    |            |            |            |
| Wife                                                                        | 49.3 (70)  | 80.0 (126) | 65.3(196)  |
| Husband                                                                     | 35.2 (50)  | 8.1 (13)   | 21.0 (63)  |
| <i>Children's Health Care</i>                                               |            |            |            |
| Wife                                                                        | 16.4 (23)  | 41.3 (62)  | 28.5 (85)  |
| Husband                                                                     | 54.3 (76)  | 31.3 (53)  | 43.3 (129) |
| <i>Children's Education</i>                                                 |            |            |            |
| Wife                                                                        | 6.4 (9)    | 2.9 (5)    | 4.7 (14)   |
| Husband                                                                     | 59.3 (83)  | 72.7 (105) | 63.3(188)  |
| <i>Children's Marriage</i>                                                  |            |            |            |
| Wife                                                                        | 13.0 (18)  | 4.0 (6)    | 8.1 (24)   |
| Husband                                                                     | 60.1 (83)  | 52.0 (87)  | 57.6(170)  |
| <i>Fostering Children</i>                                                   |            |            |            |
| Wife                                                                        | 8.6(12)    | 5.7 (9)    | 7.1 (21)   |
| Husband                                                                     | 48.2(67)   | 70.0(101)  | 56.8(168)  |
| <i>Support for Husband's Parents and Relatives</i>                          |            |            |            |
| Wife                                                                        | 6.4 (9)    | 11.5 (17)  | 8.8 (26)   |
| Husband                                                                     | 52.9 (74)  | 62.6 (91)  | 56.6(165)  |
| <i>Number of Children to have</i>                                           |            |            |            |
| Wife                                                                        | 5.4(8)     | 1.3(2)     | 3.4(10)    |
| Husband                                                                     | 27.9(41)   | 15.4(23)   | 21.6(64)   |
| <i>When to Have Another Child</i>                                           |            |            |            |
| Wife                                                                        | 8.3 (3)    | 11.0(16)   | 6.8 (19)   |
| Husband                                                                     | 22.8 (33)  | 4.2 (6)    | 13.9 (39)  |
| <i>When to Have Sex</i>                                                     |            |            |            |
| Wife                                                                        | 2.0(3)     | 2.7(4)     | 2.4(7)     |
| Husband                                                                     | 25.7(38)   | 9.0(13)    | 17.2(51)   |
| <i>Amount of Money on Food and Household Expenses</i>                       |            |            |            |
| Wife                                                                        | 23.0(34)   | 0.7(1)     | 12.0(35)   |
| Husband                                                                     | 25.7(38)   | 9.0(13)    | 17.5(51)   |
| <i>How Does Your Opinion Weigh as Compared to That of Your Husband's</i>    |            |            |            |
| Same weight                                                                 | 16.8 (25)  | 11.3 (19)  | 14.3 (44)  |
| More weight                                                                 | 2.7 (4)    | 1.3 (5)    | 2.3 (7)    |
| Less weight                                                                 | 71.8 (107) | 86.7(135)  | 78.8(242)  |
| Not taken into account at all                                               | 8.7 (13)   | 0.7 (1)    | 4.6 (14)   |

The respondents were asked to state how their opinions weigh in the home. The results show

that their decisions are seldom reckoned with. In all, 78.8% of the respondents reported that their opinions carry less weight to that of their husbands. Yet, 4.6% stated that their opinions are nothing but a pack of garbage or an unnecessary directive from a woman. An insignificant proportion claimed that their opinions out-weigh those of their husbands while 14.3% claimed theirs weigh as the opinion of their husbands. This proportion may be the well-endowed and educated woman. Women, who have the economic resources either through trading or education, tend to have a say in the family and how it runs.

### Gender Role

A number of gender role ideological statements were identified and the respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement, disagreement or neutrality with such statements. The questions tested how the women see themselves in relation to the position of their partners. They were asked to agree, disagree, or if their opinions would be indifferent to some idiosyncrasies of the society in favour of the man vis-a-vis the woman in the family. This is presented in the table 3.

Table 3 shows clearly a picture of unequal gender division of labour, ownership of and control of resources in the home between the women and their spouses. The headship of the man over his wife in the family is probably the most important reason responsible for the wide gender inequality between men and women in Igboland. The nature of this belief is confirmed

**Table 3: Distribution of the Respondents by how they agree/disagree with Gender Role Ideologies, Imo State, Nigeria**

| Decision                                                                                          | Urban      | Rural      | Total      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <i>The Husband should be the Bread Winner of the Family While the Wife Looks After the House.</i> |            |            |            |
| Agree                                                                                             | 74.0 (111) | 70.9 (112) | 72.4 (223) |
| Disagree                                                                                          | 10.7 (16)  | 20.9 (33)  | 15.9 (49)  |
| Neutral                                                                                           | 15.3 (23)  | 8.2 (13)   | 11.7 (36)  |
| <i>A Wife should not Expect Her Husband to Help with house Work</i>                               |            |            |            |
| Agree                                                                                             | 22.7 (34)  | 25.3 (40)  | 24.0 (74)  |
| Disagree                                                                                          | 62.7 (94)  | 73.4 (116) | 68.2 (210) |
| Neutral                                                                                           | 14.7 (22)  | 1.3 (2)    | 7.8 (24)   |
| <i>Fathers should not Take Care of Children</i>                                                   |            |            |            |
| Agree                                                                                             | 16.7 (25)  | 5.7 (9)    | 11.0 (34)  |
| Disagree                                                                                          | 71.3 (107) | 93.0 (147) | 82.5 (254) |
| Neutral                                                                                           | 12.0 (18)  | 1.3 (2)    | 6.5 (20)   |

**Table 3: Contd.....**

| Decision                                                                                                     | Urban      | Rural      | Total      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <i>As a Rule Men Make Better Bosses than Women</i>                                                           |            |            |            |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 30.7 (46)  | 33.5 (53)  | 32.1 (99)  |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 22.0 (33)  | 60.1 (95)  | 41.6 (128) |
| Neutral                                                                                                      | 47.3 (71)  | 6.4 (10)   | 26.3 (81)  |
| <i>The Wife should not Work when She Wants to if Her Husband is Opposed to it</i>                            |            |            |            |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 63.3 (95)  | 63.3 (100) | 63.3 (195) |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 15.3 (23)  | 32.3 (51)  | 24.0 (74)  |
| Neutral                                                                                                      | 21.3 (32)  | 4.4 (7)    | 12.7 (39)  |
| <i>It is Better for the Family when a Woman Earns Less than Her Husband</i>                                  |            |            |            |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 20.0 (30)  | 29.7 (47)  | 25.0 (77)  |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 70.0 (105) | 62.7 (99)  | 66.2 (204) |
| Neutral                                                                                                      | 10.0 (15)  | 7.6 (12)   | 8.8 (27)   |
| <i>The Husband should have Final Say on Important Family Matters</i>                                         |            |            |            |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 80.7 (121) | 79.1 (125) | 79.9 (246) |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 9.3 (14)   | 17.1 (27)  | 13.3 (41)  |
| Neutral                                                                                                      | 10.0 (15)  | 3.8 (6)    | 6.8 (21)   |
| <i>A Married Woman should have as Many Children as Her Husband Wants</i>                                     |            |            |            |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 36.7 (55)  | 16.5 (26)  | 26.3 (81)  |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 42.7 (64)  | 77.2 (122) | 60.4 (186) |
| Neutral                                                                                                      | 2.07 (31)  | 6.3 (10)   | 13.3 (41)  |
| <i>A Woman should Continue to have Children Until She has A Son</i>                                          |            |            |            |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 19.3 (29)  | 17.1 (27)  | 18.1 (56)  |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 72.0 (108) | 74.7 (118) | 73.1 (226) |
| Neutral                                                                                                      | 8.7 (13)   | 8.1 (14)   | 8.7 (27)   |
| <i>A Man should Marry Another Wife if his Wife has No Children</i>                                           |            |            |            |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 13.3 (20)  | 27.3 (41)  | 21.4 (66)  |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 79.3 (119) | 64.7 (97)  | 71.1 (219) |
| Neutral                                                                                                      | 7.3 (11)   | 8.0 (12)   | 7.5 (23)   |
| <i>A Woman Must Submit to Her Husband's Authority at All Times Irrespective of Any Inconveniences to Her</i> |            |            |            |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 42.7 (64)  | 57.0 (90)  | 50.0 (154) |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 29.3 (44)  | 38.0 (60)  | 33.8 (104) |
| Neutral                                                                                                      | 28.0 (42)  | 5.0 (8)    | 16.2 (50)  |
| <i>A Woman's Inability to have A Child to Her Husband could Lead to Conflict</i>                             |            |            |            |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 36.0 (54)  | 81.0 (128) | 59.1 (182) |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 52.7 (79)  | 15.8 (25)  | 33.8 (104) |
| Neutral                                                                                                      | 11.3 (17)  | 3.2 (5)    | 8.1 (22)   |
| <i>A Woman should Obey Her Husband at All Times</i>                                                          |            |            |            |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 81.3 (122) | 84.2 (133) | 82.8 (255) |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 6.0 (9)    | 13.3 (21)  | 9.7 (30)   |
| Neutral                                                                                                      | 12.7 (19)  | 2.5 (4)    | 7.5 (23)   |
| <i>A Woman Has A Right to Ask for Explanation for the Husband's Action</i>                                   |            |            |            |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 69.3 (104) | 72.9 (115) | 71.1 (219) |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 3.3 (5)    | 24.7 (39)  | 14.3 (44)  |
| Neutral                                                                                                      | 27.3 (41)  | 2.5 (4)    | 14.6 (45)  |
| <i>It is Often Necessary for a Husband to Beat His Wife</i>                                                  |            |            |            |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 2.7 (4)    | 9.5 (15)   | 6.2 (19)   |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 96.0 (144) | 89.2 (141) | 92.5 (285) |
| Neutral                                                                                                      | 1.3 (2)    | 1.3 (2)    | 1.3 (4)    |
| <i>A Man has Right to Look for Other Women if He Cares</i>                                                   |            |            |            |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 2.0 (3)    | 10.7 (17)  | 6.5 (20)   |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 96.7 (145) | 86.7 (137) | 91.6 (282) |
| Neutral                                                                                                      | 1.3 (2)    | 1.9 (3)    | 1.9 (6)    |

when certain traditional sex-role ideologies were posed to the respondents. A greater proportion (72.4%) agreed that the husband should be the breadwinner of the family while the wife looks after the house. Household chores are regarded traditionally as belonging to women. Only 15.9% of the women disagreed to the statement while 11.7% remained indifferent. On whether a wife should not expect her husband to help with house work, 24.0% agreed to the statement, 7.8% remained neutral while the rest disagreed. However, 82.5% disagreed that fathers should not take care of children, 11.0% agreed while 6.5% remained indifferent. Table 3 further shows that greater number of women seem to be deviating from some of these traditionally held views about the attributes ascribed to men against their wives in the home.

Male dominance is significantly reflected when high proportion of the respondents agreed that:

#### Prevalence of Violence Against Women

- \* The wife should not work when she wants to if her husband is opposed to it (63.3%);

- \* The husband should have final say on important family matters (79.9%);
- \* As a rule men make better bosses than women (32.1%);
- \* A woman must submit to her husband's authority at all times irrespective of any inconveniences to her (50.0%);
- \* A woman should obey her husband at all times (82.8%); and
- \* It is better for the family when a woman earns less than her husband (25.0%).

However, greater percentage of the women rebuffed male dominance on the following gender-role ideologies:

- o a woman has no right to ask for explanation for the husband's actions (71.1%); and
- o it is often necessary for a husband to beat his wife (92.5%).

To both statements, 14.3% and 6.2% agreed, respectively. The rest of the respondents remained neutral.

Gender inequality with respect to the married woman's motherhood role ideology is narrowing down drastically. This is reflected in the reports

**Table 4: Percentage distribution of respondents showing the patterns of violence against women, controlling for place of residence, imo state, nigeria, 2000**

| <i>Violence against women</i>                                                                                              | <i>Urban</i> | <i>Rural</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>BATTERY</b>                                                                                                             |              |              |              |
| Ever been beaten by husband                                                                                                | 84.6 (99)    | 73.5 (97)    | 78.7 (196)   |
| <i>On Average How Often Do You Get Beaten or Hurt by Your Husband?</i>                                                     |              |              |              |
| 3 or more times per year                                                                                                   | 8.5 (5)      | 12.0 (9)     | 8.8 (14)     |
| 2 times per year                                                                                                           | 25.4(15)     | 16.0 (12)    | 16.9 (27)    |
| Only one per year                                                                                                          | 40.7(24)     | 58.7(44)     | 42.5(68)     |
| Only once or 2 times ever                                                                                                  | 25.4(15)     | 13.3(10)     | 15.6(25)     |
| Did this happen while you were pregnant                                                                                    | 52.9 (45)    | 65.8 (48)    | 58.9(93)     |
| Did you take any step to protect yourself                                                                                  | 53.3 (24)    | 45.8 (22)    | 49.5 (46)    |
| Ever beaten in the past 12 months                                                                                          | 6.8 (9)      | 7.5 (11)     | 7.2 (20)     |
| Do you support a man beating his wife for any reason?                                                                      | 2.8 (4)      | 8.2 (13)     | 5.7 (17)     |
| Has anyone else close to you, that is family member or friend, ever hit, slapped, kicked, or tried to hurt you physically? | 23.1(31)     | 12.9(19)     | 17.8(50)     |
| If yes, who was that? Father in-law                                                                                        | 13.3(4)      | 77.8(7)      | 28.2(11)     |
| Other male relative                                                                                                        | 46.7(14)     | 11.1(1)      | 38.5(15)     |
| Male friend                                                                                                                | 3.3(1)       | -            | 2.6(1)       |
| Female relative                                                                                                            | 36.7(11)     | 11.1(1)      | 30.8(12)     |
| <b>Forced Sexual Relationship</b>                                                                                          |              |              |              |
| Ever been physically forced to lie with someone                                                                            | 14.6 (18)    | 27.1 (39)    | 21.3 (57)    |
| If yes, how old were you then?                                                                                             |              |              |              |
| 10-14                                                                                                                      | 5.6(1)       | 7.9 (3)      | 7.1 (4)      |
| 15-19                                                                                                                      | 33.3 (6)     | 34.2 (13)    | 33.9 (19)    |
| 20-35                                                                                                                      | 11.1 (2)     | 13.2 (5)     | 12.5 (7)     |
| 36 and above                                                                                                               | 50.0 (9)     | 44.7 (17)    | 46.4 (26)    |

**Table 4: Contd.....**

| <i>Violence against women</i>                    | <i>Urban</i> | <i>Rural</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Was it the first time you ever had sex           | 33.3(6)      | 64.1(25)     | 54.4(31)     |
| Discussed about the rape with anyone             | 56.2 (9)     | 73.5 (25)    | 59.6 (34)    |
| If yes, who did you discuss with?                |              |              |              |
| Friend                                           | 33.3 (3)     | 52.0 (13)    | 47.1 (16)    |
| Mother                                           | 22.2 (2)     | 16.0 (4)     | 20.6(6)      |
| Sister                                           | 22.2 (2)     | 12.0 (3)     | 14.7 (5)     |
| Husband                                          | 11.1 (1)     | 4.0 (1)      | 5.9 (2)      |
| Other Relative                                   | -            | 4.0 (1)      | 2.9 (1)      |
| Policeman                                        | -            | -            | -            |
| Priest                                           | 22.2 (1)     | -            | 5.9 (1)      |
| Others                                           | -            | 12.0 (3)     | 8.8 (3)      |
| <i>Cultural Violence</i>                         |              |              |              |
| Has husband ever insisted on your appeasing him? | 29.7 (43)    | 22.7 (35)    | 26.1 (78)    |
| If yes what did you offer him                    |              |              |              |
| Kolanut                                          | 72.2 (13)    | 47.4 (9)     | 59.5 (22)    |
| Cock                                             | 11.1 (2)     | 21.1 (4)     | 16.2 (6)     |
| Goat                                             | 5.6 (1)      | 5.3 (1)      | 5.4 (2)      |
| Others                                           | 11.2(2)      | 26.3(5)      | 18.9(7)      |
| Are female children here circumcised?            | 34.0 (50)    | 87.8(108)    | 58.5 (158)   |
| % support the practise of female circumcision?   | 29.9 (44)    | 74.2(115)    | 52.6 (159)   |
| Reasons for support of FGM                       |              |              |              |
| Good for health                                  | 5.7 (5)      | 55.9 (95)    | 38.9 (100)   |
| It is harmful                                    | 44.8 (59)    | 20.6 (35)    | 28.8 (74)    |
| It is traditional                                | 16.1 (14)    | 12.4 (21)    | 13.6 (35)    |
| To prevent prostitution                          | 4.6(4)       | 1.2 (2)      | 2.3 (6)      |
| Others                                           | 28.7 (23)    | 10.0 (17)    | 16.3 (42)    |
| % circumcised female children                    | 22.1 (31)    | 87.1(108)    | 52.7 (139)   |
| Reasons for female circumcision                  |              |              |              |
| It is the tradition                              | 59.5 (22)    | 85.4 (11)    | 79.6 (33)    |
| For safe delivery                                | 13.5 (5)     | 6.2 (8)      | 7.8 (13)     |
| Recommended by someone                           | 13.5 (5)     | 2.3 (3)      | 4.8 (8)      |
| Others                                           | 13.5 (5)     | 6.1 (8)      | 7.8 (13)     |
| % personally circumcised                         | 51.0 (74)    | 94.2 (147)   | 73.4 (221)   |
| If yes, at what age?                             |              |              |              |
| 1-8 days                                         | 84.3 (59)    | 59.3 (48)    | 70.9 (107)   |
| Above 8 days                                     | 15.7 (11)    | 40.7 (33)    | 29.1 (44)    |

of the women as a result of massive rejection of the following motherhood role ideological statements:

- \* a woman should continue to have children until she has a son (73.1%);
- \* a man should marry another wife if his first has no children (71.1%).

### Frequency of Wife Battery

More than three-quarters of the respondents reported ever been battered by their husbands. This is higher in urban (84.6%) than in the rural area (73.5%). The study revealed that pregnant women are no less vulnerable to battery than other women as more than half of the respondents (58.9%) of them were beaten during pregnancy. This situation is more in the rural than in the urban

center (65.8% vs 52.9%). Battery also comes from other close relatives other than the husbands. About 18% of the respondents have been hit, slapped, kicked, or tried to be hurt physically. Among these other abusers are fathers-in-laws, other male relatives, male friend and other females relatives.

### Frequency of Forced Sexual Relationship

About twenty-one percent of the respondents surveyed reported having ever been forced to have sexual intercourse against their will, and this happened most between ages 15-19. About 46.0% were forced at age above 36 years, perhaps in marriage. Among those reporting forced sex, 54.4% reported forced sex to be the first sex experience they ever had. Questions on who

actually forced the respondents to have sex against their will was not asked.

More than half of the rape victims in this study reported having discussed forced sex to people but none of these people could do anything to assist them. None of them ever reported to law enforcement agents like the police, anyway. Those discussed with include; friends, mother, sister, husband, other relative, priest and others.

### **Cultural Violence**

The Igbo culture itself presents some level of violence against women. These include the culturally required practices, which favour the men and disregard the women as equal entities in the society. For instance in Igboland, a woman is not required to break kolanut, whether a man is present or not. A boy of 5 years is culturally more important in this regard than any woman of whatever status. Some of these cultural violence against the women include: a compulsory requirement that a woman must appease her husband if he feels offended by her, female genital mutilation and early marriage. The women were asked whether they have had any cause to appease their husbands at anytime. To this 26.1% of the respondents have ever been asked to appease their husbands before peace could be restored between them. About 59.5% of the respondents have been asked to provide kolanut to appease their husbands. Other items requested include fowl, goat and other unmentioned items.

### **Frequency of Female Genital Mutilation**

Female genital mutilation is a common practice in the area as 58.5% of the respondents reported that the practice of female circumcision exists. The report shows that female genital mutilation is predominantly practised in the rural area. More than half of the respondents support the practice of female genital mutilation, and again, mostly the rural residents (about three-quarter of them). For those that supported the practice, their reasons include;

- \* It is good for health (38.9%); (55.9% rural and 5.7% urban dwellers)
- \* It is the tradition (28.8%); (12.4% rural and 16.1% urban)
- \* It helps to prevent promiscuity (2.3%); (1.2% rural and 4.6% urban) and
- \* Other reasons; (10.0% rural and 28.7% urban).

However, 47.4% that did not support the practice rejected it on the ground that it is harmful to health (28.8%); consisting of 44.8% urban dwellers and 20.6% rural dwellers. The practice of female genital mutilation was actually performed by 87.1% rural women and 22.1% urban women. The overall prevalence of female genital cutting is 52.7% as at the time of the study. And again the reasons for this practice include;

- \* It is the tradition of the land (79.6%); 85.4% rural, 59.5% urban;
- \* It enables safe delivery (7.8%); 6.2% rural, 13.5% urban;
- \* It was recommended by someone (4.8%); 13.5% urban, 2.3% rural;
- \* Other reasons, like curbing promiscuity in girls, etc (7.8%).

About seventy-three percent of the respondents were themselves circumcised and again following the same pattern, the majority, 94.7% are rural women. A little above half of the urban women were circumcised. For all those circumcised, the circumcision was carried out at infancy. In Imo State, adult or adolescent circumcision is not practiced. Children are circumcised when they are still very tender so that they would not feel the trauma of the heinous practice.

Table 5 shows that for the majority of the selected gender-role ideology, the more the women accept male dominance ideology, the higher the level of abuse observed. However, this is not true for rape. In most of the ideologies, women who accepted them reported low incidence of rape and practice of female circumcision. The situation is not consistent when we control for place of residence. Usually, these beliefs place men above the women and make them (men) to exploit every power to exhibit their superiority. It is thus expected that violence is entrenched against women, especially as they accept the position traditionally reposed on men as superior beings to women.

### **MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS OF ASSOCIATION BETWEEN GENDER-ROLE IDEOLOGY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

The dependent variables are battery, rape and female genital mutilation. The independent variables are place of residence, age, age at first marriage, level of education, type of family

structure, duration of marital union, level of income, husband's education and gender role ideologies.

Tables 6 shows the level of relationship between gender-role ideologies and the rate of violence women face. We found that gender role ideology predispose them to violence. Women who agree with male dominance ideologies are more prone to violence. The more a woman agrees with the gender role placed in favour of men, the more likely she is to suffer violence.

### BIVARIATE ANALYSIS OF GENDER-ROLE IDEOLOGY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Level of education of respondents did not have any significant effect on the type of violence they suffer. This supports that educated women are not protected from battery and assaults. However, though educational level of women did not show significant effect on battery and rape, it is negatively related to female genital mutilation indicating that the higher the level of education a woman has the less likely she is to practice female

genital mutilation. The study has brought to limelight that the education of women do not shield them from violence because of the single factor of the societal regard of women. Though women have been empowered because of their attainment to higher educational levels, it is difficult for Igbo women who are predominantly religious people to reject the opinions of their husbands in their homes or even to seek legal actions against their husbands when their rights are violated because most of them accept wholeheartedly the biblical injunction that urges wives to obey their husbands in all things. For instance, the opinions of the FGD participants in this study supports this claim. They disclosed that;

*"The man and the woman should not have equal rights in the home because the Bible supports that position of the man over the woman. The woman should always be in subjection to the man".*

*"No it is not supposed to be so because the man is the head of the family. Also, from the beginning of the world, it was ordained that it is the woman that should be under the man and not vice versa".*

**Table 5: Percentage distribution of respondents agreement with gender-role ideologies by violence against women**

| Characteristic                                                                                               | Urban  |       |               | Rural  |       |               | Total  |       |               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-------|---------------|--------|-------|---------------|--------|-------|---------------|
|                                                                                                              | Beaten | Raped | Practised FGM | Beaten | Raped | Practised FGM | Beaten | Raped | Practised FGM |
| <i>As a Rule, Men Make Better Bosses than Women</i>                                                          |        |       |               |        |       |               |        |       |               |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 91.1   | 8.7   | 52.5          | 73.2   | 23.2  | 73.5          | 80.2   | 17.4  | 62.2          |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 88.9   | 17.2  | 23.3          | 37.5   | 28.8  | 91.3          | 48.8   | 26.3  | 75.9          |
| <i>The Wife should not Work when She Wants to if Her Husband is Opposed to it</i>                            |        |       |               |        |       |               |        |       |               |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 77.6   | 11.8  | 25.0          | 58.7   | 32.2  | 77.1          | 65.8   | 24.2  | 50.3          |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 81.1   | 18.2  | 40.0          | 36.4   | 15.5  | 98.2          | 51.1   | 16.3  | 82.7          |
| <i>It is Better for the Family when A Woman Earns Less than Her Husband</i>                                  |        |       |               |        |       |               |        |       |               |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 89.7   | 6.7   | 58.3          | 70.5   | 23.0  | 61.8          | 76.7   | 17.6  | 60.3          |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 67.5   | 17.5  | 15.8          | 42.3   | 30.9  | 93.1          | 53.0   | 25.0  | 54.5          |
| <i>A Married Woman should have as Many Children as Her Husband Wants</i>                                     |        |       |               |        |       |               |        |       |               |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 66.7   | 10.8  | 11.5          | 87.1   | 26.7  | 78.9          | 75.7   | 17.9  | 29.6          |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 77.4   | 15.9  | 40.4          | 44.9   | 28.7  | 86.8          | 55.1   | 24.8  | 71.9          |
| <i>A Woman should Continue to have Children Until She Has a Son</i>                                          |        |       |               |        |       |               |        |       |               |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 89.3   | 13.8  | 68.2          | 62.9   | 8.6   | 84.6          | 74.6   | 10.9  | 77.1          |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 71.8   | 13.6  | 15.2          | 46.5   | 33.1  | 88.8          | 56.1   | 25.5  | 52.4          |
| <i>A Woman Must Submit to Her Husband's Authority at All Times Irrespective of Any Inconveniences to Her</i> |        |       |               |        |       |               |        |       |               |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 62.3   | 15.4  | 18.3          | 50.0   | 15.0  | 90.6          | 54.4   | 15.1  | 60.7          |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 93.0   | 13.6  | 51.3          | 54.8   | 40.0  | 78.8          | 69.0   | 30.3  | 67.0          |
| <i>A Woman's Inability to Have a Child to Her Husband Could Lead to Conflict</i>                             |        |       |               |        |       |               |        |       |               |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 81.1   | 13.0  | 51.1          | 49.3   | 26.2  | 88.0          | 57.7   | 22.7  | 77.4          |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 72.0   | 15.1  | 7.9           | 70.0   | 32.0  | 76.2          | 71.4   | 25.8  | 22.7          |
| <i>It is Often Necessary for a Husband to Beat His Wife</i>                                                  |        |       |               |        |       |               |        |       |               |
| Agree                                                                                                        | 100.0  | 25.0  | 50.0          | 50.0   | 14.3  | 100.0         | 64.3   | 16.0  | 90.0          |
| Disagree                                                                                                     | 70.8   | 12.8  | 21.6          | 53.9   | 93.9  | 82.4          | 60.8   | 22.0  | 51.0          |

**Table 6: Odd ratios of violence against women controlling for gender-role ideologies and place of residence, imo state, 2000**

| Correlates                                                                        | Battery     |             | Rape        |             | FGM         |             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                                                                   | Urban<br>OR | Rural<br>OR | Urban<br>OR | Rural<br>OR | Urban<br>OR | Rural<br>OR |
| <i>As a Rule Men Make Better Bosses than Women</i>                                |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Disagree                                                                          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          |
| Agree                                                                             | 1.6812      | 16.67*      | .6745       | .6745       | .5064*      | .506*       |
| <i>The Wife should not Work When She Wants to if Her Husband is Opposed to it</i> |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Disagree                                                                          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          |
| Agree                                                                             | 3.080*      | .3583       | 1.110       | 1.110       | 7.608*      | 7.608*      |
| <i>It is Better for the Family when a Woman Earns Less than Her Husband</i>       |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Disagree                                                                          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          |
| Agree                                                                             | 1.6584      | 2.62**      | 1.247       | 1.247       | .5192*      | .519**      |
| <i>A Woman should have as Many Children as Her Husband Wants</i>                  |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Disagree                                                                          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          |
| Agree                                                                             | .3104*      | 2.0573      | .675        | .6757       | .299*       | .3000*      |
| <i>A Woman's Inability to have a Child to Her Husband Could Lead to Conflict</i>  |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Disagree                                                                          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          |
| Agree                                                                             | 6.544*      | 1.3188      | 1.717       | 1.717       | 5.952*      | 5.95*       |
| <i>A Woman should Continue to have Children Until She has a Son</i>               |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Disagree                                                                          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          |
| Agree                                                                             | 1.063*      | .231*       | .353*       | .353*       | 3.062*      | 3.062*      |
| <i>It is Often Necessary for a Husband to Beat His Wife</i>                       |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Disagree                                                                          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          | RC          |
| Agree                                                                             | 567.9*      | .107*       | .3750       | .3750       | 5.908*      | 5.908*      |
| Constant                                                                          | -.4027      | -.1829      | -1.5529     | -1.552      | -2.687      | -2.687      |

OR =Odds ratio; RC = Reference categories \*P<0.001

*"Even as the last speaker has said, it is not good for there to be equal rights between man and woman in the family because while a man was created, a woman was made out of the man. The Bible supports this position. We should read the it and follow the injunctions there".*

## DISCUSSION

A woman's life especially in the traditional African setting is a grim struggle against discrimination on all fronts- economic, social and cultural. These have collectively denied her the right as a human being to self-determination and actualization of her potentials in life. In Igbo society, and indeed all male-dominated societies, women are regarded by men as being physically intellectually and socially inferior to them. Thus, the scorn, disrespect, and contempt with which she is treated. Socialization into gender roles begins early in family, community and reinforced by basic social institutions. Political, economic, legal and cultural subordination of women generally means they are easily subject to violence by men in the home and outside and are unable

to protect themselves from abuse. Prevailing social constructions of gender relations are major deterrents to reproductive health and rights of women in Igboland.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action notes that though women contribute to development through paid as well as unpaid work, their unpaid work, such as domestic and community work, is not measured in quantitative terms and not valued in national accounts. The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against women (CEDAW) states that parties shall take all appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct for men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices, customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on the stereotyped roles for men and women. This provision has not made any impact on the life of the Nigerian woman and her girl-child because of the absence of government policy on gender equality in Nigeria as well as the lack of awareness on the part of the women populace and

especially those affected by gender inequality.

Women have come to settle with the gender role ideology which so much reflected in the responses the respondents gave on the issue of gender roles. This in no small way have limited their abilities and thus exposed them to a number of risks against their health. It is apparent that equal rights, opportunities and access to resources, equal sharing of opportunities for the family by men and women, and a harmonious partnership between them are critical to their well being and that of their families, yet not a few women have seen themselves as second class citizens who are supposed to be loyal to their husbands no matter what violence they are passing through. In this survey, we found that 85.0% admitted that they don't own landed property and some attributed the reason to the fact that their possessions are their husbands. Many of them placed the economic decision making to reside with their husbands. For instance, quite a great percentage (71.2%) agreed the man should be the sole breadwinners of the house but attributed their own domestic work to merely degraded position as house-keepers. Also, 64.3% agreed that their working status is strictly on the special permission of their husbands since this percentage accepts that a woman should not work if her husband is opposed to it. Likewise, most respondents agreed in favour of the men in most of the other gender-based ideological statements considered.

Even though these traditional gender roles can jeopardize the reproductive health of women, it has continued to be condoned because of the traditional requirement of the malefolk. The women were asked if they would refuse man's sexual approach when they are not ready, and 45.0% answered affirmatively. More than half of them would not resist man's approach even if they are not prepared for it, thus subjecting themselves as men's property.

On the practice of female genital mutilation, 53.7% have promoted female circumcision while 55.7% supported the propagation of the pernicious practice on female children. Also, more than half of the women interviewed supported the issue of child marriage.

What appears to attract massive rejection is the issue of wife battery. When asked whether they support a man beating his wife, only 6.3% supported it. Also, only 7.5% of the women supported that it is often necessary for a man to beat his wife.

*To buttress the low position which women place on themselves, the women interviewed in the FGD were asked, "Do you think that men and women should have equal right in decision-making in the family?"*

*The urban respondents replied:*

*"No. This is because the man is the head of the family. For the woman, she is the caretaker of the house".*

*"The man is the grand-controller of the family affairs. There are instances that their control yields bad results. But do we really have an option in disobeying? Certainly not! Having considered that a woman is the rib taken from the man, we have no option than to overlook things they do to foster peace".*

*"The woman should not have equal rights with man. Man's rights should supercede that of the woman because the woman is just the helper of the man".*

And the rural respondents on their parts responded:

*"It is not good for the woman to struggle for who controls what in the family".*

It is apparent from the above that societal norms have influenced women and what they think about themselves- a little wonder that many of them can not protect themselves from abuse.

## CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussions, it has been shown that in the Igbo patriarchal family system there is structural inequality based on sex differences and socially constructed economic roles which place women on subsidiary roles as dependants who lack control over their lives. Hence they are denied their rights as individuals to participate in decision-making processes and the control of their reproductive lives.

The impact of gender role ideology in perpetration of violence against women needs urgent attention. There is an urgent need to reverse social attitudes and beliefs that legitimize male violence and the notion of male superiority at the family level among women, their husbands, and society at large.

Though article on the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women supports that state parties shall take all appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct for men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination

of prejudices, customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on the stereotyped roles for men and women, it has not made a major impact on the life of the Nigerian women and her girl-child. This is largely because there is an absence of government policy on gender inequality in Nigeria as well as lack of awareness on the part of the populace and especially those who are affected by gender inequality. It is pertinent therefore that the government should not only incorporate this sensitive aspect to its policy but also remove the poor commitment to gender issues with the intent of complete elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women in Nigeria and address gender role ideologies in reproductive health studies and programmes. It is equally important to use IEC to address and change these inimical gender role ideologies. Finally, there is a need for further studies in this area of research using more of qualitative techniques.

**KEY WORDS** Violence. Gender. Battery. Forced Sex. Genital.

**ABSTRACT** Gender inequalities is at the root of all forms of gender-based violence. This inequality is reinforced by ideologies that emphasize unequal sex role.. The extent this is translated into specific actions has not been fully investigated. In this study we examine the relationship between gender-role ideology and prevalence and incidence of violent acts against women as proxied by wife battery, sexual coercion or rape and female genital mutilation. Data was collected from a sample of 308 women aged 15-50 in selected parts of Imo State, Nigeria. The sampling design was a multi-stage cluster sampling technique. Both qualitative and quantitative tools were used in the collection

of data. Analysis was done using SPSS. The findings show that attitudes about violence against women are mostly influenced by male-dominance ideology. It is also shown that women, irrespective of their place of residence, subscribe to gender role of male authority, though there are some noticeable changes. The paper calls for community education to change societal attitudes to violence against women while also noting the reproductive health and rights implications of these ideologies.

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