

Gender Discrimination and Intimate Partner Violence Patterns Among In-school Adolescent Girls in Low-Income Communities in Ibadan, Nigeria

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Abstract

Background: Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) which is an extreme form of Gender Discrimination (GD) has been recognized as a public health problem especially among young women globally. Research on IPV and GD is sparse among adolescent girls in Nigeria. This study was conducted to assess the types of GD, prevalence and patterns of IPV and its correlate among in-school adolescent girls in government owned secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Methods: This was a cross-sectional survey. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select three hundred and ninety adolescent girls from six public government owned secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria. A structured self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data on socio-demographic information, GD, IPV and other factors that may expose an individual to IPV. Descriptive, bivariate and multivariate analysis were carried out at 5% level of significance.

Results: The mean age of the study was 15.85 (SD=0.96). Three hundred and seventy-seven (96.7%) were Yoruba, one hundred and ninety-four (49.7%) reported to had ever been in a relationship, forty-seven (12.1%) reported to be homeless in the last 3 months. Three hundred and eight (79%) of the respondent reported GD of any forms. Among the one hundred and ninety-three respondent who had ever been in a relationship twenty-three (11.8%) had experienced psychological violence in their lifetime, fourteen (7.3%) physical and six (3.3%) sexual violence. Respondent who had ever been in a relationship (OR=12.46; 95% CI: 4.74-32.71); who had been homeless in the last 3 months (OR=3.78; 95% CI: 1.76-8.12) had higher likelihood of experiencing intimate partner violence. However, there was no association between GD and IPV.

Conclusion: There is high prevalence of IPV and GD experience among the study population, which implies that there is a need for an educational intervention to reduce the vulnerability of adolescents to IPV.

Keywords: Intimate partner violence, Gender discrimination, Female adolescent, Low-income settings

1 Introduction

Gender Discrimination (GD) which can also be referred to as gender disadvantage or inequalities can be defined as an unfavorable

treatment to anyone based on sex, race, religion, ethnicity and many more (Emmanuel et al., 2020). Gender discrimination occurs globally, in every sector of life and it affects women more than men. It occurs when social norms and attitudes specify that women should hold a

subordinate position to men (Hosang & Bhui, 2018). Gender discrimination has also been identified as an associated factor of sexual harassment, assault, restriction of movement, discrimination in education, labor, relationships and marriages (Obi & Adayonfo, 2018).

Majority of adolescent girls experience different forms of gender discrimination both from intimate and non-intimate partners. When GD occurs frequently, it affects girl's self-esteem, body image, the belief they have towards some certain situation regarded as norms (Chandrashekarappa et al., 2017). Viewed from a feminist perspective, emphasis has been laid on how inequality at the societal level connects to power, control dynamics and women subordinate relationship (Maharaj, 1995). Gender discrimination can put female adolescents in vulnerable situations where they accept some unhealthy behaviors displayed by their male partners, consequently putting them at the risk of abusive relationship and even limit them from leaving such relationships to seek help and protection (Adebowale, 2018).

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is a common act that has been identified to be the third major cause of morbidity and mortality among women of reproductive age globally (Hebert et al., 2019). The prevalence of violence against women is 30% and 37% globally and in Africa region respectively. The consequences of violence are not only restricted to the victim but their families especially their children, and the community they live (Ogboghodo & Obarisiagbon, 2019).

Intimate Partner Violence starts primarily from adolescence and early adulthood, most

often in the context of marriage and cohabitation which implies that it is not only restricted to the elderly (Okedare, 2023; Okedare & Fawole, 2024). Adolescent stage is a key period where the foundation of a woman's future is established and it has been reported that the prevalence of intimate partner violence is high among this population especially the student population (Chandrashekarappa et al., 2017). It thus, impact the lives of this young girls negatively thereby exposing them to several risky and unhealthy behaviors, which may also affect their educational attainment with many of them dropping out of school as a result of early pregnancy or marriage (Fawole et al., 2021; Salawu et al., 2022).

Globally, the prevalence of IPV is 20% in the western pacific, 22% in high-income countries and Europe, 25% in WHO Region of the Americas, 33% in the WHO Africa region, 31% in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean region and 33% in the WHO South-East Asia region (Pokharel, 2014). In Nigeria according to the report from NDHS, 16.4% of adolescent female have experienced abuse and it varies from 29% to 78% based on the geopolitical zones of the country (NPC and ICF, 2019).

Several factors such as level of education, poverty, alcohol use, level of social support, among others (Adebowale, 2018; Okedare, 2023; Okedare & Fawole, 2024) have been identified to be a major cause of intimate partner violence; however very little attention has been given to the influence of gender discrimination in a relationship (Onigbogi et al., 2015). This study was conducted to determine the prevalence and patterns of intimate partner

violence, different forms of gender discrimination experienced, and an association between gender discrimination and intimate partner violence.

2 Materials and Methods

2.1 Study Area

The study was conducted in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. This study was conducted in two Local Government Area (LGAs) of five urban LGAs in Ibadan metropolis. These were Ibadan North-east and Ibadan South-east. Each of the LGAs has twelve wards that consist of low-middle-and high -income communities. The principal inhabitants of these LGAs are Yoruba's and are basically involved in artisanship, trading and informal sectors. The LGAs has a total of forty-six public secondary schools. The secondary schools selected were public secondary schools, strategically sited to ensure easy accessibility for the masses especially the urban poor and rural dwellers. The number of students selected was 390.

2.2 Study Design

A descriptive cross-sectional survey was employed and the study was carried out in July 2021

2.2.1 Study Population

The study population was in-school adolescent who were mostly in the senior classes. Majority of the population were within the age group of 15-19 years. Adolescent girls were eligible if they were enrolled in the selected schools and present in school during data collection.

Adolescent girls in final classes were excluded because they were writing their final exams. Three hundred and ninety female adolescents participated in the study.

2.2.2 Sampling Technique

A multi-stage sampling technique was used. In the first stage, two LGAs were randomly selected by balloting from the list of five urban LGAs in Ibadan metropolis (Ibadan North-East and South- East). In the second stage, three wards each were selected by simple random sampling from the list of twelve wards in each LGAs. The selected wards were those that comprised of low-income communities. The third stage comprised of selection of six schools from the list of thirteen schools in the three selected wards and the LGAs by simple random sampling. Finally, proportional allocation was used to select participant in each school, the selected schools have about the same number of girl's enrollment. Hence, sixty-five adolescent girls were selected from each school. The adolescent girls were within the age of 15-19 years who majorly in senior secondary classes.

2.2.3 Data Collection Instrument

The questionnaire was pre-tested among twenty female students from another secondary school. The questionnaire comprised of four sections. Sections A consisted of socio-demographic data of the respondents, section B comprised of gender attitudes, section C consisted of experience of parental violence, and section D was on dating and experiences with boys which includes types and forms of intimate partner violence. The questionnaire was essentially self-administered because of the sensitive

nature of the question. However, trained research assistants were in the vicinity to assist respondents with necessary questions or clarification that may arise as well as to ensure high response rate.

2.2.4 Study Variables

The independent variables included:

- i. Socio-demo graphic data which includes age, relationship status (ever had a relationship or not), ethnicity (Yoruba or others), religion (Christianity or Islam), living situation (living with both parents or not) and been homeless
- ii. Gender discrimination; Experience of parental violence.
- iii. The Dependent variables in this study were experience of IPV among adolescent girls, experience of at least one form of violence (Physical, sexual and psychological) from an intimate partner.
- iv. Information on forms of IPV were obtained by asking the following questions,
- v. Physical IPV- victimization was obtained by asking respondents if their current or past boyfriend had done any of the following to them in their life time: Hit, pushed, slapped, choked or otherwise physically hurt the respondent.
- vi. Sexual IPV- respondent were asked if their present or past boyfriend had pressured respondent to have sex with them when they don't feel ready to have sex with them, insisted on having sex

- with the respondent, used threat to make the respondent have sex with them, used force (hitting, holding down, using weapon) to make the respondent have sex with them, called respondents "ashewo or olosho" (prostitute) or any other degrading names and if he had made respondents do something sexual when the respondent didn't want to.
- vii. Psychological IPV- respondents were asked if their partner had ever insulted or called the respondent names like ugly or stupid, threatened or hurt the respondent if she didn't do what he wanted her to, if partner had destroyed something that belonged to the respondent on purpose, if he had told the respondent who to hang out with and if he had gotten into the respondent e-mail or other account or phone without the respondent wanting them to.

2.3 Data Management Analysis

The questionnaire was checked for error, completeness and accuracy on the field and numbered serially for ease of identification. Completed copies of the questionnaire were sorted and coded. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Descriptive analysis was carried out to summarize socio-demographic characteristics, types of gender discrimination and prevalence of IPV. Associations were tested using Pearsons Chi-square test, and predictors of IPV were explored with multivariate analysis. Level of significance was set at 5%.

2.4 Ethical Consideration

Ethical approval was obtained from the UI/UCH Ethics Review committee, College of Medicine University of Ibadan

3.1.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

As shown in **Table 1**, the mean age of the respondents was 15.85 years (SD=0.96). Three

Table 1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 390)

Variables	Frequency (%)
Age group (Years)	
>=15	174 (44.6)
16 and above	216 (55.4)
Mean age (SD)	15.85 (0.96)
Religion	
Christianity	159 (40.8)
Islam	231 (59.2)
Ethnicity	
Yoruba	377 (96.7)
Others (Ibo, Hausa, Nupe and Ebira)	13 (3.3)
Relationship Status	
Never had a relationship	196 (50.3)
Ever had a relationship	194 (49.7)
Living Situation	
Living with both parents	317 (81.3)
Living with either parents	50 (12.8)
Living with other family\care giver	23 (5.9)
Homeless within the last 3 months	
Yes	47 (12.1)

(UI/EC/21/0183). Letter of approval was obtained from the Oyo State Ministry of Education. Approval and informed consent were also obtained from the principal of the respective secondary schools. Consent forms were sent to the parents through the girls and only girls whose parents sign the consent form was recruited for the study. Assents were taken from the participants before the commencement of the study. They were informed of the freedom to decline if they are not interested in participating. In order to ensure confidentiality, names and other forms of identification were not included in the questionnaire.

3 Results

hundred and seventy-seven (96.7%) of the respondents were Yoruba, three hundred and seventeen (81.3%) were living with both parents. Two hundred and thirty-one (59.2%) were Muslims. One hundred and ninety-four (49.7%) reported to had ever been in a relationship, forty-seven (12.1%) reported been homeless within the last 3 months.

3.2 Patterns of Gender Discrimination Experienced

Two hundred and five respondents (52.6%) had experienced gender discrimination by their teachers who expected less from them in certain subjects at school, one hundred and thirty-eight (35.4%) had been told they can't do certain

things in school due to their gender, one hundred and thirty-two (33.8%) had felt people in their family expected less from them in school, one hundred and fifty-three (39.2%) have felt discouraged in school, one hundred and fifty-eight (40.5%) had been judged by other people, one hundred and sixty (41%) had been sexually harassed in public, one hundred and thirty-nine (35.6%) had been put down and one hundred and twenty-three (31.5%) had been humiliated in some ways (Table 2). In summary, three hundred and eight of the respondents (79%) had experienced at least a form of gender discrimination.

Table 2. Patterns of Gender Discrimination Experienced (N = 390). Multiple responses were allowed.

Variables	Frequency (%)
*Discrimination in School	
Less expectation from teachers	205 (52.6)
No encouragement on developing career plans	153 (39.2)
Told you cannot do something	138 (35.4)
*Discrimination at home	
Less expectation from family members	132 (33.8)
*Discrimination in Community	
Inappropriate/unwanted sexual comments	160 (41.0)
Humiliated or shamed	123 (31.5)
Put down or made to feel unworthy	139 (35.6)
Judged about what you will be good at	158 (40.5)

3.3 Prevalence of IPV

The lifetime prevalence of IPV was 14.6%. The prevalence of respondents who had experienced psychological was twenty-three (11.8%), fourteen (7.3%) and six (3.3%) for sexual

violence among the one hundred and ninety-three respondents who had ever been in a relationship respectively (Figure 1).

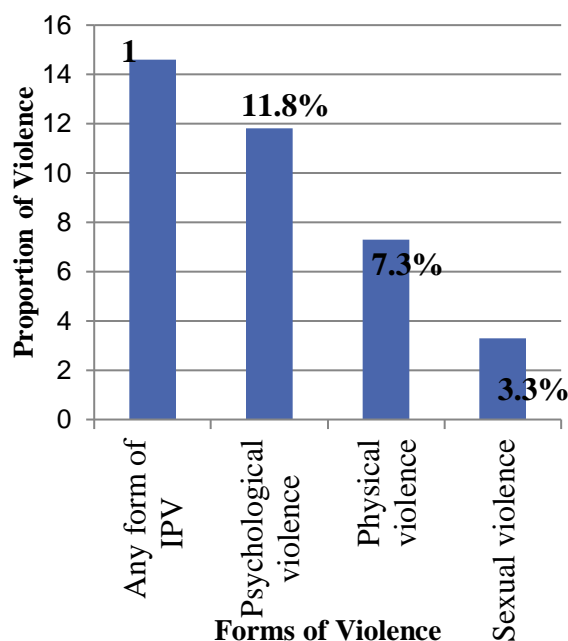


Figure 1. Types of Intimate Partner Violence Experienced

3.4 Patterns of IPV

Fourteen (7.6%) respondents reported to have experienced physical violence. Among the respondents who had experienced sexual violence ten (5.2%) reported they were pressured to have sex, while four respondents (2.1%) were forced to have sex, called a sexually degrading name, and were made to do something sexual respectively. The most predominant form of psychological violence among respondents was that spouses told them not to talk to others and who to hang out with twenty-nine (15%) while the least was being insulted which was reported by five respondents (2.8%) (Table 3).

3.5 Attitudes towards IPV

she ask if he has been unfaithful, one hundred

Table 3. Patterns of Intimate Partner Violence Experienced (n=193)

Variable	Frequency (%)
Physical Violence	
Hit, pushed, slapped, choked or physically hurt you	14 (7.3)
Sexual Violence	
Pressured you to have sex with him	10 (5.2)
Insisted on having sex with you when you didn't want to	7 (3.6)
Used threat to make you have sex with them	5 (2.6)
Used force to make you have sex with them	4 (2.1)
Called you 'ashewo' or 'olosho' or any sexually degrading name	4 (2.1)
Made you do something sexual when you didn't want to	4 (2.1)
Psychological Violence	
Insulted you or called you names like ugly or stupid	11 (5.7)
Threaten to hurt you if you didn't do what he wanted you to	11 (5.7)
Destroyed something that belonged to you on purpose	13 (6.7)
Told you not to talk to others or told you who you could hang out with	29 (15.0)
Gotten into your e-mail or other account or phone without wanting him to	16 (8.3)

Table 4. Attitudes towards Intimate Partner Violence (n = 390)

Variables	Frequency (%)
A husband has good reason to hit his wife if she:	
Does not complete the house chores to his satisfaction	68 (17.4)
Disobeys him	66 (17.4)
Refuses to have sexual relations with him	70 (17.9)
Ask him whether he has other girlfriend	117 (30.0)
Finds out she has been unfaithful	145 (37.2)
Goes out without telling him	101 (25.9)
Burns the food	93 (23.8)
Neglects the children	134 (34.4)

Table 5. Decision making capacity to leave an Abusive Relationship (N = 390). Multiple responses allowed.

Variables	Frequency (%)
I am very confident to:	
Leave an unsafe or unhealthy relationship	236 (60.5)
Successfully leave a male partner because he is abusive	214 (54.9)
Seek assistance of intimate partner violence	221 (56.7)

The respondents' expectation, beliefs, understanding or perception of intimate partner violence was shown in Table 4. One hundred and forty five (37.2%) of the respondents agreed that a husband has the right to hit his wife if he finds out she has been unfaithful, one hundred and thirty four (37.2%) agreed if she neglects her kids, one hundred and seventeen (30.0%) if

and one (25.9%) agrees if she goes out without telling him, ninety three (23.8%) if she burns the food, seventy (17.9%) if she refuses to have sexual relations with him, sixty six (17.4%) if she disobeys him, and sixty six (17.4%) if she does not complete the house chores to his satisfaction.

3.6 Decision making capacity to leave an Abusive Relationship

Two hundred and thirty-six respondents (60.5%) reported that they were confident enough to leave an unsafe or unhealthy relationship, two hundred and fourteen (54.9%) can successfully leave an abusive partner, and two hundred and twenty-one (56.7%) are confident enough to seek assistance if found as victim of violence (Table 5).

3.7 Experience of Parental Violence

Among the three hundred and ninety participants, ninety-one (23.3%) of respondent had witnessed their father swear at, insult or put down their mother, fifty-two (13.3%) had seen him push, grab, shove and slapped their mother, sixty-four (16.4%) had seen him threatened her, and fifty-two (13.4%) had seen him beat up or otherwise hurt their mother.

3.8 Factors Associated with Intimate Partner Violence

A significant association between and intimate partner violence and gender discrimination (p-

value= 0.013), experience of parental violence (p-value = 0.039), homeless within the last 3 months and ever had a relationship (p-value \leq 0.001) was detected.

Overall, according to the adjusted model, ever had a relationship, homeless within the last 3 months were most strongly associated with the risk of suffering intimate partner violence (OR=13.10;95% CI;4.93-34.85 and OR=3.79; 95% CI=1.73-8.13, respectively).

4 Discussion

Several studies have been published on prevalence and patterns of intimate partner violence and experience of gender discrimination in advanced societies among older and younger women (Gartland et al., 2022; Sanz-Barbero et al., 2018). However, there are few of such on adolescent girls especially in developing countries like Nigeria. This study reported the prevalence, patterns and factors associated with intimate partner violence and also experiences and factors that could

Table 6. Factors Associated with Intimate Partner Violence

Variables	Crude odd ratio	p-value	Adjusted odd ratio	p-value
Age in years	1.48 (1.13-1.94)	0.004	.23 (0.89-1.69)	0.200
Relationship status				
Never had a relationship	1.000		1.000	
Ever had a relationship	24.81 (7.60-80.98)	<0.001	12.46(4.74-32.7)	<0.001
Homeless within the last 3 months				
No	1.000		1.000	
Yes	4.84 (2.46-9.51)	<0.001	3.785(1.76-8.12)	0.001
Experience of gender discrimination				
No	1.000		1.000	
Yes	1.81 (1.29-8.66)	0.013	2.090(0.75-5.75)	0.153
Experience of parental violence				
No	1.000		1.000	
Yes	1.81 (1.03-3.18)	0.039	1.57 (0.82-2.98)	0.166

expose an individual to any of the forms of gender discrimination.

In our study, we observed that high proportion of female students are victims of discrimination in especially in school, which seems to confirm that gender inequality still prevails in our society despite efforts both from the government and non-governmental organization to build the bridge. It is important that school authorities should institute intervention that promote reporting of experience of gender discrimination, and government should mount vigorous awareness campaign towards achieving gender equality.

Regarding victimization of intimate partner violence, the percentage of female students who suffered any of the types of intimate partner violence was lower compare to other previous reports (Oluwole et al., 2020; Umana et al., 2014) perhaps due to the lower sample size and the young age of the respondents considering the fact that young people have difficulty recognizing themselves as being victims of abuse and they assume that certain form of violence are part of been in love.

Controlling behavior was the most prominent form of violence suffered by the student which is a form of psychological violence. It is most normalized and prevalent violence as it reflects the increased vulnerability of women to be violated and this shows the patriarchal dominance of male that encourage men to exercise control over women. Psychological violence is easier to perpetrate and often not visible and can be subtle yet it is the lethal form of intimate partner violence (Fawole et al.,

2018; Okedare & Fawole, 2023). It is therefore important to educate female students on this behavior so they can identify it as a part of violence.

Also, a significant percentage of female student in this study reported to have experienced physical and sexual violence in their relationship. The prevalence of physical violence in our study is low compare to other previous studies (Oche et al., 2020; Onigbogi et al., 2015; Owoaje & Olaolorun, 2012) and may be because physical violence appears to be easily recognized and most adolescent are knowledgeable about it because it mostly endangers women's safety. Sexual violence is often overlooked and most time victims tend to not open up especially when the perpetrator is their intimate partner and most times many women do not feel or accept they are victims of sexual abuse in their relationship, and this may be the reason why its rate is low in our study compare to other studies (Ogboghodo & Obarisiagbon, 2019; Sigbeku et al., 2015).

Some students also agreed that certain attitudes displayed by a wife should justify the reason why her spouse can violate her. Therefore, students who supported this could be permissive to physical violence in their dating relationship as they might see it as a way of been corrected for being disrespectful to their partners. This may also be one of the reasons why some are still victims of violence.

Based on the aim of the study, we observed that experience gender discrimination and experience of parental violence are among the factors as to why female students experienced

intimate partner violence. This seems to be based on fact that majority of this students have been underestimated in school, family and their communities and so in their relationship they become submissive to the point accepting violence perpetrated by their male partners. Overtime, experience of parental violence has been reported to be factor of intimate partner violence and our result is similar to previous studies. We also observed that students who had ever been in a relationship are at risk of experiencing intimate partner violence, also been homeless could expose an individual to intimate partner violence and this could happen when one of the spouses especially the female partner is economically and financially dependent on the other spouse. It is therefore also important that measures should be taken by governmental, non-governmental and communities on how to provide safe haven for homeless children.

5 Conclusion

Despite several efforts to build the bridge of gender discrimination, up till this moment most adolescent girls still experience any of the form of discrimination. From the result of the study the rate of intimate partner violence is still high especially among the age group of study and they experience all of the forms of IPV that older women experience. Also, the study shows IPV often goes unrecognized because most research work as regards IPV are mostly directed to married women. Thus, there is a need to broaden the scope of these studies to also incorporate those who are dating because violence commences most frequently in early

adulthood which then progress when they get married. This is one of the strength of the study. Educating adolescent girls more on IPV and GD will help to reduce the rate of and exposure to IPV and GD.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest

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