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Cultural Conception and Changes in Husbandhood: Evidences from Three Socio-cultural Groups in Nigeria

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Introduction

Life transition has been characterized by functional differentiation. Movement from childhood to adulthood is characterised with a number of differential capabilities and thus differential functions. Marriage or any other form of recognised union transforms the man to husbandhood, a status which is characterised by distinct functions within the household and from which expression of manhood really begins, sustained and expressed. The expression of husbandhood translates to doing 'gender'. Traditionally, the most basic form of gender can be observed within the household, where the expectation for the fulfillment of various specialised household obligations are prominent (Gentry et al, 2003). It is further observed that husbandhood within the household is a dynamic concept which has changed over the years in line with the general social reconfigurations in the society – from the primitive agrarian to modern society.

With the transition from adulthood to husbandhood as a specific status, a different personality is imposed, as men become more competitive and work-oriented in the society. This is as a result of the responsibilities which define the status of husbandhood, and thus must be met to conform with societal expectations and subsequent societal approval. Fulfilling such obligations is like conforming with expectations that are meritable. Becker (1965) labeled the family a 'small factory' that produces commodities (children, health, leisure etc) of value to the family.

Husbandhood approximates a construction of breadwinner and equates "instrumental" functions within the household as opposed to the 'expressive' functions of motherhood as described by Parson (1949, 1964) (Gentry et al, 2003). Hence, the husbands embrace the function of providing for the family

and wives embrace the legacy of meeting the everyday needs of the family members. In essence, the standpoint in the construction of husbandhood is the notion of 'breadwinner' as opposed to that of 'housewife' or 'motherhood'. Daniels (1987) describes the family work (as responsibility of motherhood) as unseen and unacknowledged because it is unpaid and commonplace. There is the dichotomy of 'inside and outside' responsibilities within the household. Husbands take up 'outside' responsibilities while mothers stay inside dealing with home duties, providing nurturing and supportive roles.

Decision-making roles are mostly performed by the husband. Husbands have been found to have greater influence in making decision on cars, vocations, housing, while women dominate suggestions on appliances, furniture, food and groceries (Cunningham and Green, 1974, Belch et al, 1985). Domestic works are the main assignment of mothers, and husbands' roles are not influenced by the wife's working status (DeVault, 1997, Robinson, 1977, Berk and Berk, 1979). Allen and Walker (2000) conclude that there is nothing responsible for sexual division of labour than whether one is a husband or a wife. For a husband to do otherwise amounts to doing gender inappropriately.

Husbands usually differentiate between work and leisure but wives are likely to combine leisure with family activities (Henderson, 1990). Wives' traditional leisure activities (such as crafts, sewing, knitting, gardening, reading, cooking and crocheting) are associated with domestic labour, while men's leisure (such as golf, hunting, fishing, attending sports events, clubs etc) deviates from domestic labour. The responsibilities of playing with the children, childcare, preparing meals, cleaning, and washing are within the domestic frame of motherhood. Husbandhood derives its substance from the status of begetting, protecting, and providing for the entire household. Gentry et al (2003) explain that husbandhood or masculinity is dependent on not doing the things that mothers do, noting that, supporting in domestic duties by the husband is now conceived as expression of love and care.

Household production of responsibilities is the hallmark that sets the disparities in statuses within the family. It is also a significant cue in the clamour for equality and equity within the household, especially between the two sexes. The differential biology which is ordained can not be altered and this imposes certain irreducible functions of either of the sexes. As the husband can not do the breastfeeding, carry pregnancy, produce eggs, so the wife can not produce sperm. The natural duties make the wife to be dependent (especially during pregnancy and childbearing) and this makes husbandhood the provider, and the protector of the family.

The disparity in household responsibilities or sexual division of labour has been contested, especially by feminists and other gender analysts. The argument

is that such roles are as a result of social-cultural processes which are artificial and so irrational. Inequality and inequity within the household is assumed to be a product of patriarchy. It is assumed that there is no exclusive domain for the claim that husbandhood approximates provider and protector rather than an exploitative construction of reality in human society. Still along this line, it is pertinent to examine the extremes in husbandhood. 'This leads us to the notion of husband as the wife beater, the embezzler, the criminal, exploiter and perpetrator of all forms of violence against womanhood. Some husbands may not provide for nor protect their household. They are indifferent to the 'assumed' social responsibilities of the husband. These various contestations led to the present study which sought to examine the concept of husbandhood among the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, namely, the Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa. Specifically, the study aimed to examine the meaning of a husband and associated responsibilities, and the changes which may have occurred in the perception of a husband across generations.

Methods

This study covers three major geo-political zones in Nigeria, specifically the North, the West and the East. It focuses upon three major ethnic groups found in these zones, that is, Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo, respectively. In addition, it incorporates a comparison between the rural and urban areas in each of the study areas. Table 1 presents the specific study sites in each of the three study zones.

Table 1: Urban and rural study sites in three selected geo-political zones of Nigeria

Geo-political zone	State	Community
North	Kaduna	Urban: Zaria Rural: Wanka
West	Oyo	Urban: Oyo Rural: Ikereku
East	Enugu	Urban: Awka Rural: Achalla

The Study combines the use of a quantitative survey with qualitative methods, particularly Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and In-depth Interviews with Key Informants (IDI). The questions raised in the study focus on husbandhood and the roles and expectations of husbands.

The quantitative survey applies a structured interview schedule. The

questions were mostly closed-ended and focused on the same topics as the FGD guide and IDI schedule.

Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

The respondents were selected by purposive stratified sampling in each of the three zones with the major ethnic group of each zone. The sample for the study was also stratified to include male and female respondents as well as rural and urban dwellers. The following table presents the breakdown of the sample by gender and by state for the FGDs and IDIs conducted. A total of 87 FGDs and 65 IDIs were conducted in the study. The number, sex and residence of respondents surveyed are also included in the table.

Table 2: Summary of samples used in Phase Two of Male Responsibility Study

Study Area	FGD		IDI		Survey (%)		
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Total
North: Kaduna State	27	8	15	6			
Urban (Zaria)					251(72)	100 (28)	351
Rural (Wanka)					99(67)	49 (33)	148
East: Anambra State	10	11	10	8			
Urban (Awka)					253(72)	100 (28)	353
Rural (Achalla)					101(67)	50 (33)	151
West: Oyo State	15	16	12	14			
Urban (Oyo)					179(60)	120 (40)	299
Rural (Ikereku)					135(67)	68 (33)	203
Total	52	35	37	28	1018(68)	487 (32)	1505

As shown in Table 2, a total of 1,505 respondents were interviewed in the survey. About 1/3 of the respondents were selected in each of the zones. The stratification by gender was with the ratio of approximately 2 males to each female. This was justified due to the emphasis upon the viewpoints of males on the issues of male responsibility, but with the need to balance their views with those of the females. The stratification by rural - urban locality was also proportioned to have a larger sample from the urban than the rural areas due to the higher population in the cities relative to the rural towns and villages.

Analysis of Data

The data from the survey were analyzed with the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and presented as frequencies and percentages. The data are tabulated and arranged in bar charts in the report.

The qualitative data were coded according to the responses offered by the respondents and discussants for each question. In this way, basic trends and ranking of response categories could be determined. The qualitative findings are useful for providing insights for fuller understanding of the quantitative data. In most cases, the presentation of data is disaggregated by zone, gender and rural - urban residence. This allows for a comparison between the major characteristics of the sample that are considered relevant to the study.

Findings

Characteristics of the Sampled Respondents

From the findings of the survey, basic characteristics of the sampled population can be used to describe the respondents. In most cases, the findings are disaggregated by gender and locality.

Age: Table 3 shows that the majority of the sampled respondents are in their 30s or 40s with the exception of females from Wanka, who are relatively younger, and males and females from Ikereku who are older than the mean of the other sites. Generally, one can conclude that the respondents are sexually active, and for the most part, still in the ages of procreation. In all cases but Ikereku, the sampled males are older than the females which is consistent with the pattern of marriage partner selection.

Table 3: Mean age of survey respondents (n=1,505)

Zone	Site	Mean age in years (SD)	
		Male	Female
North	Zaria	39.6 (12.3)	32.4 (10.2)
	Wanka	42.5 (14.0)	28.2 (8.4)
East	Awka	39.8 (14.9)	36.5 (12.1)
	Achalla	41.4 (15.4)	33.5 (10.4)
West	Oyo	46.2 (16.3)	42.6 (16.1)
	Ikereku	51.6 (14.2)	53.3 (16.1)

Religion: As expected, the respondents from the North are nearly all Muslim, those from the East are largely Christian and the Western sample are mixed with a majority of Muslims in Oyo and a majority of Christians in Ikereku. There is also a significant proportion of traditional worshippers in the East, particularly in the rural areas.

Table 4: Religion among survey respondents by site (n=1,505)

Zone	Site	Religion (%)		
		Islam	Christianity	Other
North	Zaria	99	1	--
	Wanka	99	--	1
East	Awka	--	92	8
	Achalla	--	71	29
West	Oyo	78	21	1
	Ikereku	29	70	1
Total		52	43	5

Religion is an important determiner of gender responsibilities. According to Islam, for example, a husband is expected to provide the food, shelter, water, fuel and other basic household needs for the wife or wives and children. A man is not supposed to marry or take an additional wife unless he is able to provide for her and her children. As will be shown later, however, not all Muslims adhere to the Islamic injunctions. Similarly, Christians are enjoined to provide for their families, although specific distribution of responsibilities is not specified. Traditional religions often set the pattern for local cultural norms. Therefore, there is usually a strong correlation between religious practices and the local culture. Since traditional religious sects are locality-specific, variations in gender relations can be expected from one community or group to another.

Level of Educational Attainment: Table 5 illustrates the level of formal education attained by the surveyed respondents. The general trends are that males are better educated than females and urban dwellers are better educated than rural residents. It is also apparent that educational level overall is highest in the East. The Western rural sample is better educated than the rural respondents from the North, but the urban respondents from the two zones are similar.

Table 5: Highest educational level attained among survey respondents (n=1,505)

Zone	Site	None		Primary		Secondary		Post-2 ^o	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
North	Zaria	38	56	16	23	31	17	15	4
	Wanka	78	92	7	8	10	-	5	-
East	Awka	6	6	21	19	41	38	32	27
	Achalla	21	22	43	26	33	40	24	8
West	Oyo	32	41	36	29	22	22	11	8
	Ikereku	41	71	42	53	15	6	2	-
Total		32	44	26	23	28	24	15	10

Informal education is also an important means of enlightening the population, particularly in areas where the opportunity for formal education is low. Functional literacy classes for adults is an avenue for not only teaching people how to read and write, but also for making available to them with specific information on their income-generating activities, health and other important topics. The percentage of the sample that has attended adult literacy as seen in Table 6 follows the trend of educational level in Table 5. Study sites that have a larger percentage of their surveyed respondents with no formal education will naturally have a higher percentage that has taken adult literacy classes since those that have primary school and above would have no need for such classes. Despite the higher proportions of female respondents without formal education, however, the percentage of females that attended literacy classes is still lower. This reinforces the recognition that females have less opportunity for education than males, particularly in the North and West and in the rural areas. With the higher formal education level in the East generally, there is little need for adult literacy classes. In the East, there is also less disparity in educational level between the sexes.

Table 6 also considers the percentage of the respondents in each zone that have attended Koranic classes. Koranic education is naturally related to the distribution of the population by religion. Since Islam is not usually found among the sampled Ibo population of the East, Koranic education is also not found. In the West, the percentage of respondents that attended these classes is higher in Oyo than Ikereku in conformity with the results on religion. The importance of Koranic education in the North, regardless of the level of formal education is reflected in the fact that 100% of the male and about 95% of the female respondents attended Koranic classes. This denotes the fact that education and awareness of male responsibility and reproductive health issues could be facilitated through this avenue with the cooperation of the Islamic teachers in the North.

Table 6: Attendance at adult literacy and koranic education classes among survey respondents (n=1,505)

Zone	Site	Adult Literacy (%)		Koranic Education (%)	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
North	Zaria	23	19	100	95
	Wanka	24	2	100	96
East	Awka	6	6	---	---
	Achalla	3	2	---	---
West	Oyo	9	4	30	16
	Ikereku	7	9	7	4
Total		12	8	40	34

Household Composition: The composition of the households was found to vary somewhat from one locality to another. By household, this study refers to people 'eating from the same pot'. This does not necessarily relate to all of the people living in the same compound or all the relations of the household head who may be residing there. From Table 7, it can be seen that the median or most common household size ranges from 10 persons in Zaria to 5 persons in Achalla. The percent of households headed by men married to only one wife is highest in Awka and Oyo and lowest in Wanka.

Table 7: Number of people in household by survey respondents

Zone / Site	Median number per household		Monogamous households (%) by male respondents
	Adults	Children	
North: Zaria	4	6	54
	Wanka	3	43
East: Awka	3	3	61
	Achalla	2	54
West: Oyo	3	4	61
	Ikereku	3	56

In the following sections, specific issues relating to husbandhood are considered. The results reflect the findings from both the qualitative and the quantitative analysis.

Meaning of a Husband

In Iboland, to be a husband is strongly associated with one who has paid the bride price and performed the necessary traditional marriage rites as shown by 60% of the opinions offered in the FGDs. During the IDIs, respondents

agreed that a husband is one that has met the cultural expectations of the in-laws. According to selected respondents:

When a man is referred to as one's husband, it means that he has gone to the woman's family and performed their tradition as he is supposed to do. (Rural Ibo female during IDI).

Informants from the East further noted that when a woman says 'this is my husband', it means that the man is her superior. The husband is considered to have the 'family in his hand.' In the West, the Yoruba respondents perceived a husband to be someone who has any or all of four mentioned characteristics, listed according to priority ranking, as follows:

1. head of household,
2. pay dowry or brideprice,
3. provide a 'cover' for the wife, and
4. meet expectations of in-laws.

Seeing the husband as the head of household is the most common answer of all respondents and discussants from all three zones. Interestingly, payment of brideprice was considered more significant among urban males than females or rural dwellers generally in the West, compared to responses from the East that placed traditional rites, including the payment of dowry, as primary. Most respondents from the North agreed with the definition of a husband as the 'head of the household', but other common definitions were someone who has a wife or has children. Given the cultural situation among many ethnic groups in Nigeria, including the groups selected for this study, there are situations where male family members who have no marital relationships with some women may still be referred to as husbands. For example, an older male in-law may be referred to by a woman as her husband. In some cases, an older female relative may even refer to a younger male relative as her husband.

'Being a cover for the wife' implies the importance placed on meeting the needs of, and protecting, the wife. Urban respondents were, however, less concerned about this characteristic compared to the rural participants who considered it to be more important. Perhaps this is due to the fact that urban women are somewhat more independent and self-reliant than rural women. Meeting expectations of in-laws was the least ranked of the four characteristics. In particular, female informants did not consider this to be significant.

Responsibilities of a Husband

Very often one finds that the only way to define something or someone is by describing what he or she does. This is the case with the previous section on what it means to be a husband and what people consider to be his responsibilities.

These responsibilities were largely found to fit into two categories. First, and most importantly, it is generally accepted that a husband's responsibility is to take care of the economic and social needs of the wife. An urban male from the East had this remark during the IDI:

A husband is supposed to care for the woman he is married to. He should be able to feed her well, seek her interest and welfare even to her family and family members.

It is generally accepted that 'to care for the woman' involves providing food, clothing, medical care and social or emotional support. When the marital union is blessed with children, the duties of the husband and father become mixed as these responsibilities are extended to the household. This was apparent in the answers of the respondents who noted that a 'husband' has the duty of making decisions for the family and catering for their welfare, including the training of the children.

Secondly, the husband is expected to ensure the physical protection of members of his household. From the responses in the West, it was found that providing physical protection was considered more important among the urban dwellers than the rural residents. None of the female rural participants responded that physical protection by the husband was an important responsibility.

The consequences of a man failing in his responsibilities as a husband can roughly fit into two categories: the consequences for the man as a person and for his marriage relationship and family. In terms of the effect upon the man himself, he will likely lose respect both within the family and the community. During one of the IDIs with an urban male in the East, this was said:

If a man fails to do what he is supposed to do as a husband in the family, it will cause a very big problem because his children will not regard him as their father and the wife will not call him a good husband. The neighbours will not regard him as a responsible man. He will be a disgrace to his neighbours, children and his family at large.

The effect of an irresponsible husband / father upon the family is equally considered to be a serious problem. The family will likely experience misunderstandings and conflicts in terms of exchange of words, deceiving one another and even physical fighting. Most respondents recognised the probable loss of respect by the wife who will feel she is being cheated or not loved as before. In response, the wife may then refuse to perform her duties as well. According to one Eastern respondent, in some cases, "the wife may then begin to live a bad life and look elsewhere for help if she has problems." In the same way, when the man of the house is irresponsible, the children will lose 'direction' and become wayward.

In the findings from the West, the responses were also categorised into major consequences that could befall a man if he fails to meet his responsibilities as a husband. These consequences, again, can be seen as the effect upon him personally and upon his family situation. In order of importance, the consequences as ranked in the West are as follows:

1. Man seen as irresponsible,
2. Misunderstanding and conflict will result,
3. Separation or divorce may follow, and
4. Respect from the wife will be lost.

Changes in the Role of Husbands

In each of the study sites, there was agreement that changes had occurred in the perception of a husband and what the role should be across generations. Among the changes considered to be occurring in the role of the husband since the previous generation, particularly relative to the wife are the following: women are now more helpful to the husbands; making more financial contributions to the upkeep of the household; more assistance is received from the in-laws; higher incidence of failure of husbands meeting their responsibilities has been noted; women now receive more privileges; husbandhood is less prestigious in present times; and wives no longer give as much respect to their husbands.

A number of reasons were given for these changes. These reasons are interrelated to a large extent. For example, higher educational opportunities for women is one of the benefits of development, which results in greater occupational opportunities for them with more financial independence and ability to carry more household responsibilities. In the North, it was also acknowledged that part of the change may be due to the fact that in the past, early marriage was also more common and females were younger when they were given in marriage. The general opinion across localities was that men had lost some of their former position of respect:

Husbandhood in the olden days was more prestigious than it is today. The wives of today do not give much respect as their olden day counterparts. In those days, the mere mention of 'husband' in the home gets everybody nervous. But the changes today do not give room for that. The first cause is academics. The women are very much academicians these days. So they now begin in their homes that they can be equated with their husbands. In the bid of the kind of power tussle, changes begin to develop. In the olden days, the women obey the last command of the man, but today a man cannot scold a highly read woman carelessly. If the man tries it, the woman will retaliate (urban female from East).

..... the present husbands fail to play their expected roles in the family..... due to the fact that they divide the work in the family and tell the woman what she will contribute to the family as it is presently, but no in the olden days, the man is the head of everything and that is the reason women of those days were called *oriaku* meaning 'wealth eater', but today women are *okpataaku* or 'wealth provider' (rural female from East).

One of the issues raised in the study was whether there may be situations where a woman could be considered to be a husband. In the East, there was some agreement in the IDIs and FGDs that there are situations where a woman could be seen as a husband, although the view was more common among the females than the male participants. In some locations in Iboland, there are unique social arrangements that account for this position. For example, a woman without children or whose husband died may get married to another female through a 'dummy' male husband so that the 'wife' will be raising children for the woman. The first woman thus takes the position of a husband. This situation may also arise when the woman has given birth to only female children and she desires to have male children for her husband. Another situation in which the woman takes the position of the husband may arise if the husband falls sick and is not able to meet up with his responsibilities in the home. The woman may then have to take his place and may be regarded as the husband. A similar situation may occur if the husband is dead and the woman is then saddled with the responsibility of training the children and meeting all the household needs.

Among the Yoruba, there was also strong support that a woman could be seen as a husband. It was asserted that husbandhood status is not tied to sex alone. There are situations that could lead to a woman being considered a husband. These are usually the result of financial constraints, particularly the husband not being able to provide for the family as expected. Such a situation may or may not be seen as a sign of male irresponsibility as it may sometimes be a result of circumstances beyond the man's control. This is illustrated by the following responses:

May God not push us into trouble. When the husband can't perform financially in the home and the wife takes up the responsibilities like food, clothing and school fees, the husband will be looking at the wife as the husband in the home. (IDI urban male).

The wife could be seen as a husband when the wife is performing all the functions and roles of the husband at home. The husband will be at home as a figure head, it is one prayer that God should not give us such a useless husband. (IDI rural female).

According to one of the rural female discussants in the West, the husband may fall into trouble in the office or 'from some enemy in the family'. The wife should then stand by her husband and conceal everything. She should continue to provide for the family, but not let others know. Another rural Yoruba female went further to state that a situation in which the wife is considered the husband is very abnormal:

There is no such situation in as much as the wife has not used devilish spirit to take this role of the husband from him, she can't be the husband. It happens in some other places whereby the wife has power over the husband, that one will notice the authority being wielded by the wife over her husband.

Some of the Hausa respondents also noted that certain situations could arise where a woman could be regarded as a husband. On the other hand, a few respondents were of the opinion that under no circumstances would a woman be regarded as a husband.

From another perspective, respondents were asked if any situation could arise where a man who is not married to a woman is referred to as her husband. The results again showed that in Iboland, this may occur, although males were more likely to agree to this suggestion than females. Some of the possible instances include when a man and woman are cohabiting and outsiders would hold the view that they are husband and wife. Some of the discussants also mentioned the case of a woman calling her brother-in-law husband. This is an expression of respect for the husband and his family, but does not connote any other relationship. On the other hand, some of the participants were of the view that a man who did not pay the bride price of a woman can never be called a 'husband'. The following quotation from an urban male was taken during an IDI:

No, he will not be seen as the husband of the woman – they are just making friends. Even after bearing a child or children for the woman, he will go empty-handed; the woman will take the children because he did not pay any bride price on her head. It is only friend they are doing, that is how it is in Ibo culture.

In the results from the West, the overwhelming majority agreed that an unmarried man could be considered to be a husband. The following illustrates some of the situations whereby a man who is not married to a woman could still be seen as a husband:

If a man is taking the responsibilities expected of a husband in the life of a woman, then the people would be saying that the man is the

husband of the woman. Moreover, if people see them moving together, they would say surely this man is the husband to this woman.

It is possible if the person so referred is the younger brother of the husband. We also call female members of the husband's family 'my husband'.

The responses from the FGDs in the North also showed that there are occasions where a man who is not married to a woman could be regarded as her husband. For instance, when a man plays the expected roles of a husband, such a man could be regarded as the husband of that woman even if not legally married to the woman. On the other hand, the rural males and the urban females were more likely to hold the view that a man could not be considered to be a husband unless he is legally married to the woman.

An important aspect of male responsibility is that a man take actions while he is still alive to protect the wife/wives and children in the event of his demise. Such actions are often contrary to cultural prescriptions and personal wishes, but they demonstrate the man's concern for the welfare of his family even after his death.

Figure 1 clearly shows that in most of the study sites, people believe that the role of protecting the family is primarily, if not solely, the responsibility of the man.

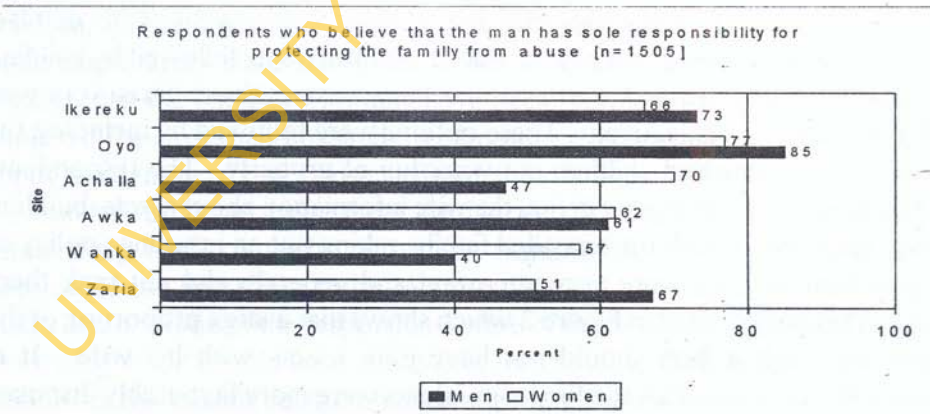


Figure 1: Percentage of survey respondents by locality and gender who stated that the man is solely responsible for protecting the family from abuse.

The respondents were asked to consider what a husband should do to protect his wife from suffering in the case of his death. A number of actions were mentioned by the participants in the IDIs and FGDs. These actions were as follows: ensure the children are properly trained, build a house for the wife,

put savings in the bank for her, ensure wife has a trade or employment, give wife information on assets, write a will, take out an insurance policy, share out property before death, include names of wife/children as owners of property, and build good relationships between wife and his family.

It is interesting that in the East, the need to build a house for the wife was mentioned more by the females than males who focused more attention on training the children, employment for the wife and providing savings or information on assets. An interesting and relevant cultural belief may affect the way men view the need to put in place ways to protect the wife and children in case of the man's death. Among the Ibo, the father was traditionally thought to continue to watch over his family even after his death. Even though modern religious beliefs have replaced such beliefs, the view may still be held by many. For this reason, some actions might be considered unnecessary since the man may believe that he can continue to protect his family after death:

.....another way a father takes care of his children when he dies is that in Ibo belief, they believe that a father in spirit takes care of their families and that they don't back them. That is why when someone is dying, people will be telling him 'may your absence be better than your presence. Look at these children you are leaving, don't forget them, take care of them (Rural female IDI participant, East).

During the IDIs in the West, nine options were mentioned as possible actions a man could take to protect his wife and children in the event of his demise. The most highly ranked action was to teach the wife a trade, followed by building her a house. The third and fourth options were to train the children very well and to write a will respectively. These options were followed by including the name(s) of the wife and children in ownership of property. The respondents did not believe, however, that giving the wife information about assets, building a good relationship with the extended family, taking out an insurance policy or keeping bank savings were very important and generally did not rank them highly. This is illustrated in Figure 2 which shows that a large proportion of the respondents felt a man should not have joint assets with his wife. It is noteworthy, however, that the Ibo respondents were more favourably disposed to joint ownership of property and bank accounts. This may be partly due to the lower incidence of polygamy.

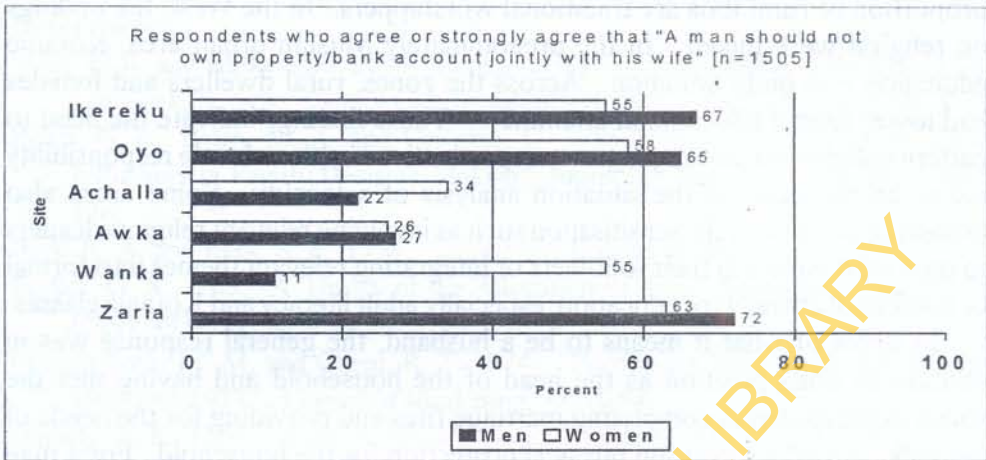


Figure 2: Percentage of survey respondents by locality and gender that believe a man should not have joint assets with his wife.

It should be mentioned that differences in responses were observed between the rural and urban participants and between the males and females in the West. For example, more emphasis was put upon teaching the wife a trade and building her a house by the urban respondents than by the rural dwellers who in most cases would be largely involved in agricultural activities and housing in the family compound would usually be assured in any eventuality. Training the children, on the other hand, was more highly ranked by the rural discussants. Male respondents were also more willing to discuss the importance of these actions than the females who may have been reluctant to discuss what would happen if they lost their husbands. Culturally, it is frowned upon to openly talk about the demise of one's husband while he is still living.

Similar responses came from the North. Teaching the woman a skill or establishing her in a trade, as well as training the children were generally considered the best ways to protect the wife and children in the event of the man's death. None of the respondents were of the view that sharing of property or writing a will should be done to protect the wife. This is likely due to the belief that the Islamic religion makes adequate provision for the maintenance of the widows and fatherless children. It is interesting to note that only the women mentioned the issue of obtaining insurance for the wife.

Conclusions

In the North, the population was nearly all Muslim with lower formal education and very high levels of Koranic education. In the East, formal education levels were highest and Christianity predominates, but a significant

proportion of rural Ibos are traditional worshippers. In the West, the findings on religion were mixed. In the predominately Muslim urban area, Koranic education was quite common. Across the zones, rural dwellers and females had lower formal educational attainment. These findings indicate the need to pattern enlightenment campaigns on reproductive health and male responsibility issues on the basis of the situation analysis of a locality. Some areas also present opportunities for sensitisation such as involving relevant religious leaders to pass information to their followers or integrating relevant themes into formal or nonformal channels of education, especially adult literacy and Koranic classes.

In terms of what it means to be a husband, the general response was in relation to one's position as the head of the household and having met the social expectations in completing marriage rites and providing for the needs of the wife, as well as ensuring physical protection for the household. For a man to be considered a husband is largely related to what he does and to what extent he meets the socially determined responsibilities toward his wife and in-laws. As the marriage is blessed with children, the responsibilities of 'husband' become merged with those of 'father', extending to the provision for and protection of the children.

There is strong social pressure to fulfill these responsibilities or the man is likely to lose the respect from his family and the community. The family will also be in disarray. It was noted that in recent times, wives / mothers are taking on more of the household responsibilities due to economic conditions. Because women are making greater contributions, the general view was that they now receive more privileges and husbandhood has a lower status than in the past. In certain situations, females may be considered to hold the position of a 'husband'. This may be, but is not necessarily, a sign of male irresponsibility or financial incapability since certain cultural practices may lead to this condition. It may also be the result of the absence or death of the husband. It was also seen that an unmarried man could be considered to be a husband if he takes on the responsibilities on behalf of someone.

One area of male responsibility that needs public enlightenment is in taking actions by the man while he is alive to protect his wife and children in the event of his death. While people in all localities believe that a man should protect his family, there are personal and cultural reservations about several important, specific actions such as making out a will or having joint property / bank accounts with the wife. One remembers that personal assets were considered a topic that was not often even discussed by many husbands and wives. In general, however, respondents considered educating children, ensuring the wife has a skill or trade and providing a house for the family to be major ways to take care of the wife and children in case of the husband's premature demise.

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