

# Associations Between Internet and Traditional Media Usage and Users' Attitudes Toward Wife-Beating in Nigeria

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Submitted: 22 December 2022. Accepted: 20 September 2023. Published: 20 November 2023  
Volume 32, 2024. pp. 190–207. <http://doi.org/10.25133/JPSSv322024.012>

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## Abstract

This study quantitatively examines the associations between the Internet and traditional media (e.g., television, radio, newspapers) usage and users' attitudes toward wife-beating in Nigeria. Data from the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey involving 13,311 men (aged 15 to 59 years) and 41,821 women (aged 15 to 49 years) were analyzed using multiple logistic regression models. The central question was whether frequent Internet and traditional media users significantly differed in their attitudes toward wife-beating justification compared to individuals who seldom used these media channels in Nigeria. The results showed that Nigerian online media users were substantially less likely to approve of wife-beating compared to their non-users. However, for traditional media usage, only radio usage was significantly associated with a reduced likelihood of wife-beating approval among women. Newspaper usage was associated with a higher level of justification, while television was not significantly related to wife-beating support. This study emphasizes the need for the Nigerian media channels to effectively join the international campaigns seeking to eliminate intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW).

## Keywords

Agenda-setting theory; attitudes toward wife-beating; internet; Nigeria; traditional media

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## Introduction

The roles of the Internet and traditional media apparatuses such as the radio, television, and newspapers in attitudes formation, behavior modification and timely dissemination of helpful health and other necessary information among users have been well documented (Birru et al., 2004; Cassell et al., 1998; Cho et al., 2015; Cotten & Gupta, 2004; Dutta-Bergman, 2004; Lissman & Boehnlein, 2001; Rains, 2007; Romarri, 2020; United Nations, 2015; Uthman et al., 2009; Zach et al., 2012). In Spain, for example, Romarri (2020) found that Internet usage increased users' awareness of the global problem of racial discrimination and boosted their willingness to accept immigrants into Spain compared to non-users. Similarly, Kabir (2022) found that women who had access to traditional media (e.g., radio, television, newspapers) had increased awareness about maternal services and were more likely to visit and access maternal healthcare facilities in Bangladesh. However, the effects of the Internet and traditional media usage on users' attitudes and behaviors have not always been positive or desirable (Henry et al., 2020; Tandoc et al., 2015; Wei, 2007; Ybarra et al., 2008). Studies, especially those originating from the more advanced Western societies, have shown that the Internet can also serve as a platform to negatively influence others and perpetrate various crimes (e.g., online harassment, stalking, victim-blaming and shaming, and revenge porn, among others) (Henry et al., 2020; Tandoc et al., 2015; Wei, 2007; Ybarra et al., 2008). Thus, as argued by the interpretive flexibility school, technology is not inherently agentic in communicating desirable attitudes only but can also disseminate less desirable attitudes and behavioral models (Doherty et al., 2006; Sandhu, 2016).

As part of its gender equality campaigns and targets, the United Nations (2015) recommended engaging information and communication technology (ICT) and other media channels in disseminating messages discouraging all forms of violence against women and the social norms that legitimize them across all member-states. Messages discouraging all forms of violence against women and girls, including intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW), are expected to be widely distributed via both local media channels and across the Internet (Pierotti, 2013). Exposures to anti-IPVAW messages across channels are expected to result in attitudinal changes, leading users to reject all forms of violence against women. Although the relationship between Internet usage and attitudes toward violence against women (for example, wife-beating—a form of physical IPVAW) has been scarcely examined in the global south's context in general and sub-Saharan Africa in particular, available research on the effects of traditional media usage on users' attitudes toward violence against women has been inconsistent and inconclusive. For example, while Uthman et al. (2009) found that listening to the radio was significantly associated with reduced wife-beating justification among users in Madagascar and Rwanda, they also found that radio usage increased users' likelihood of justifying wife-beating in Zimbabwe.

In Nigeria, where the current study is located, few previous studies examined the relationships between Internet and traditional media usage and users' attitudes toward wife-beating (except for the investigation by Alabi & Ramsden, 2021, 2023). To provide empirical information needed to supplement ongoing efforts seeking to end all forms of violence against women in Nigeria, this study asks the following questions: are frequent users of different types of media more likely to reject the norms of wife-beating? Does the association between media usage and users' attitudes differ by the kind of media used? Are the results of the relationship between media usage and users' attitudes toward IPVAW the same or different for male and female users? To answer these research questions, data from the most recent

nationally representative Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) of 2018, involving 13,311 men aged 15 to 59 years and 41,821 women aged 15 to 49 years, were analyzed in this study.

## Theoretical frameworks

This study borrows its theoretical insights from the agenda-setting theory to discuss the relationships between media consumption and users' attitudes toward IPVAW in Nigeria. The agenda-setting theory describes the systematic way the media exerts its power and influence in deciding what the consumers see and think about rather than what they think, want to think, or ought to think about (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). By choosing to report specific issues (sometimes as captions, headlines, lead stories, on front pages, or by reporting them more frequently) and not others, the media indirectly sets the agenda and influences the people on what they should consider significant enough to think about and warrant public discussions. Other potentially significant issues, but scantily, less, or not at all reported, are downplayed and downgraded as less important – irrespective of how potentially substantial they are. Issues or topics the media consider essential enough for public interests are also mentioned and discussed more frequently, so much so that frequent users are more likely to have encountered such issues while using the media. Results from previous studies suggest that people who use specific media sources often place more importance on issues the media consider salient (Geiß, 2022; Wanta & Ghanem, 2007; see also Gerbner, 1998, for the cultivation effect of frequent exposure via television). Scholars seem to agree that regular exposure to specific news or media items, especially among normal media users, tends to influence users' attitudes to think more about the saliency of the exposed issues (Geiß, 2022).

Applied to the potential effect of media usage on users' attitudes towards wife-beating, the media agenda-setting theory orients us to expect that users of the Internet or traditional media types (e.g., radio, television, newspapers) would consider intimate partner violence against women vital if they often encounter them during their usage of these media types. Wife-beating and other issues related to intimate partner violence against women will be considered less important if they are less or not reported in the media. Previous studies suggest that, in traditional media types (i.e., radio, television, newspaper), issues of violence against women may not make the headlines or attract considerable attention without external interventions such as paid sponsorships from organizations addressing the problem of violence against women (Anorue et al., 2012; Ochonogor et al., 2022; Swindle, 2021).

In Nigeria, where the current study is situated, studies have reported that the Nigerian media agenda-setting is such that sensitive gender issues about gender equality and violence against women are less reported (Ochonogor et al., 2022). As argued by Tijani-Adenle (2016), such silence may not be because men dominate the Nigerian media but because the women in the industry's top managerial and influential positions are silent about the matter. Media silence about the problem of wife-beating and other forms of IPVAW in Nigeria may explain why Oyediran's (2016) trend study covering 2003 to 2013 found that controlling for other factors, listening to the radio was not significantly associated with users' attitudes toward wife-beating in Nigeria, even though an older report by Oyediran and IsiugoAbanihe (2005) showed a significant negative relationship between listening to the radio and wife-beating justification. Similarly, old reports about television viewership and newspaper readership also seem to have similar findings, and, sometimes, users are more likely to justify wife-beating than non-users, contrary to expectations (Antai & Antai, 2009; Oyediran, 2016).

Unlike traditional media, however, the Internet has become a place where the content of what is shared is not determined solely by corporate media organizations but also by individual users who often raise agendas and discuss matters that matter to them. Although, more recently, content on Internet media, such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, have been censored if adjudged to violate their community guidelines, the Internet still provides a larger room for individual concerned netizens to air their views compared to traditional media channels. Beyond individuals, many non-governmental organizations addressing the problem of violence against women have also moved online and used their official handles to raise awareness about IPVAW and promote anti-IPVAW campaigns (CIPESA, 2022). Together, these campaigns can reach individuals who use the Internet frequently.

According to the agenda-setting theory, frequent encounters with persuasive anti-IPVAW campaigns, if encountered online, can influence users' perceptions of the seriousness of IPVAW and, perhaps, orient them to be more likely to reject IPVAW, especially where contents consistently discourage all forms of violence against women and IPVAW. But the reverse is also possible if individual users are consistently exposed to pro-IPVAW content online, for example, victim-blaming, shaming, stalking, gaslighting, sexual harassment, and revenge porn, among others (Henry et al., 2020; Tandoc et al., 2015; Wei, 2007; Ybarra et al., 2008). While the majority of these cited studies are based on experiences among netizens in countries in the global north, their relevance in the global south is also possible, as noted by the Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa [CIPESA], especially given the recent increase in Internet usage, online violence, sexual harassments, and revenge porn in the latter within the last decade (Otikpa, 2022; South African Government, 2019). Irrespective of the direction of influence, the frequent mention of violence against women on the Internet compared to the traditional media channels implies that Internet users may be more likely to have ideas and informed positions about issues of IPVAW than non-users. This study will, therefore, comparatively examine attitudes toward wife-beating among Internet and traditional media (e.g., television, radio, newspaper) users in Nigeria.

## **Internet and traditional media use and users' attitudes toward wife-beating in Nigeria**

The agenda-setting theory has important implications for research on the potential effects of Internet and traditional media exposures on users' attitudes toward wife-beating in Nigeria. To differentiate the effects of traditional media and Internet media usage in Nigeria, it might be essential to note that some traditional media firms (e.g., newspapers, radio, television) also have an online presence in addition to their local broadcasts to reach a wider audience. However, their online or offline content is usually the same, as the online version only extends the local broadcasts. All local media broadcasts in Nigeria are primarily regulated, monitored, and censored by local, regional, or country-level regulating bodies. As a national broadcasting standard, all local media stations in Nigeria must comply with the national broadcast codes and promote Nigerian indigenous cultures, morals, and community life. To ensure that all local media channels report mainly regional issues or issues they consider of local importance (agenda-setting), all local radio and television channels are restricted from reporting a high proportion of non-local content (Government of Nigeria, 1999). Thus, Nigerian local channels set the agenda and often reiterate only issues they think are important and deserving of the quotas. However, there is no limit on the amount of foreign information users can encounter online. Netizens can raise and are more likely to encounter issues of global concerns, such as gender equality or anti-wife-beating campaigns, freely on the Internet than via local media channels.

Regarding wife-beating agenda-setting in local media, previous research suggests that the levels of gender equality and anti-wife-beating awareness creation have been mixed across media types. For example, two Nigerian native scholars, Aladi and Okoro (2021), recently analyzed the contents of four of the most widely circulated national newspapers in Nigeria – *The Vanguard*, *the Punch*, *The Guardian*, and *This Day* – for over three years (from 2015 to 2017), for agenda-setting on any issues related to gender. The scholars lamented the poor representation of gender issues in Nigerian newspapers, implying that gender issues have not been considered of much value to warrant media spaces and public discussions over the period studied. Likewise, Anorue et al.'s (2012) interviews of media users and Ochonogor et al.'s (2022) study about users' encounters with gender issues in the Nigerian press media found that issues related to gender equality, women, or violence against women are usually pushed to the background and are generally less reported (Anorue et al., 2012; Ochonogor et al., 2022). When eventually reported, they are framed in contexts that some female readers find rather disturbing and unsatisfactory (Degarr & Okpeh, 2016). Women are portrayed as weak, dependent on men, subordinate, and inferior to their male counterparts (Ekeh, 2018). Other contents also associate “women with domestic violence, victims of war and ... as sex [objects]” (Degarr & Okpeh, 2016, p. 58). Important issues affecting women, such as IPVAW, are likelier to be tucked somewhere between the newspapers' pages than on the front or cover page. A recent study in Nigeria suggested that “the Nigerian press are focusing on reinforcing traditional gender roles and norms rather than challenging them” (Tijani-Adenle, 2016, p. 396).

Unlike the newspapers, however, radio and television content currently contain programs sponsored by non-governmental organizations such as the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) and others that promote content that sensitize the masses against wife-beating and other forms of violence against women and girls in some parts of the country (Kpilaakaa, 2022). For radio content, a relevant example is a radio program titled *Silent Voices*, which explicitly reports domestic violence issues against women and girls weekly to more than 100,000 listeners. The program also has a monthly podcast that reaches a minimum of 41,000 listeners (Kpilaakaa, 2022). Although users might choose not to be influenced by anti-IPVAW campaigns disseminated weekly via *Silent Voices* and other similar programs, the awareness created and the public proscriptions of domestic violence on local radio networks can influence radio users against justifying wife-beating in Nigeria. However, this program is mainly broadcast in parts of the North Central region of Nigeria, leaving doubts about the effects of radio usage on wife-beating attitudes elsewhere in Nigeria.

Television is another media type that has recently featured anti-IPVAW campaign programs following sponsorship by international non-governmental organizations. For example, the Spotlight Initiative, a non-governmental organization addressing the problem of violence against women and girls around the globe, has since 2021 increasingly partnered with media organizations to increase awareness and campaigns against all forms of IPVAW in Nigeria, primarily via television programs (Spotlight Initiative, 2021b). Although choosing whether or not to be influenced by media content can be a user's prerogative, the agenda-setting theory orients us to expect that frequent exposures to issues of IPVAW on television will be significantly associated with users' attitudes toward the significance of IPVAW and regular exposure to anti-IPVAW campaigns can potentially reduce users' likelihood of justifying wife-beating.

In Nigeria, although previous studies have scarcely examined the effects of Internet exposure and users' attitudes towards violence against women (or wife-beating) except for a few (see Alabi & Ramsden, 2021, 2023), recent studies show that the proportion of Nigerian Internet

users is increasing (Kemp, 2018; Silver & Johnson, 2018). International reports show an increasing number of Nigerian netizens who take to the Internet to proscribe all forms of violence against women and girls (Spotlight Initiative, 2021a). Recently, the global advocacy against all forms of violence against women called “The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV)” initiative, which began in 1991 and runs annually from November 25 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to December 10 (Human Rights Day) has gained more supports and has been hosted across several online governmental, non-governmental and individual user’s media platforms in Nigeria – see, for examples, blog pages of several Nigerian netizens (Alaran, 2022; Dav, 2022; Hauk Foundation, 2020). This massive online presence and proscriptions of violence against women have the capacity not only to create awareness of gender-sensitive issues such as IPVAW (including wife-beating) but also to increase the proportion of Internet users who reject violence against women.

Based on the discussion above, the following hypotheses were derived and to be tested in this study.

Hypothesis 1: Newspaper readers will more likely justify wife-beating than non-users.

Hypothesis 2: Frequent radio users will be less likely to justify wife-beating than non-users.

Hypothesis 3: Frequent television users will be less likely to justify wife-beating than non-users.

Hypothesis 4: Frequent Internet users will be less likely to justify wife-beating than non-users.

## Research methods

### Data, inclusive samples, and ethical consideration

The study analyzed data from the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS). The 2018 NDHS is an all-inclusive, nationally representative survey that targeted men (aged 15–59 years) and women (aged 15–49 years) across all the regions, states, and rural and urban residences in Nigeria, without ethnic, religious, or socioeconomic biases or discrimination. In Nigeria, the NDHS is conducted by the [Nigerian] National Population Commission (NPC) and sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) with technical assistance from the ICF (National Population Commission & ICF, 2019). Every five years, the NDHS collects nationally representative data on respondents’ sociodemographic, health indicators, contraceptive use, fertility behaviors, HIV/AIDS, media usage, and attitudes towards wife-beating, among others. However, for the first time, in 2018, the NDHS included data on respondents’ Internet usage and other information (National Population Commission & ICF, 2019).

The responses were provided in separate datasets tagged Men’s Recode (for men), Individual Recode (for women), and Couples’ Recode (with a reduced number of respondents), among

others. To report attitudes towards wife-beating among male and female Internet and traditional media users, the current study employed and analyzed three datasets: Men's Recode dataset, Women's (individual) Recode dataset, and Combined (Author-Pooled) dataset comprising both men's and women's datasets. The datasets are publicly accessible online at [www.dhsprogram.com](http://www.dhsprogram.com). The men's dataset involved a total representative sample of 13,311; the women's data included 41,821 women. At first, the men's and women's datasets were analyzed independently but were later pooled to form a third dataset ( $N = 55,132$ ) to test whether the associations between media usage and attitudes towards wife-beating are moderated by gender. The DHS survey procedures and questionnaires were reviewed and approved by the ICF Institutional Review Board (IRB) (The DHS Program, n.d.). Similarly, the survey followed the standard ethical procedures for collecting domestic violence research data and protecting respondents, as the World Health Organization (2016) recommended.

## Variables and measurement

### Dependent variable

**Attitudes towards wife-beating:** Men and women were asked individually if they would justify a man beating his wife in any of the following five hypothetical scenarios: (i) if she goes out without telling him, (ii) if she neglects the children, (iii) if she argues with him, (iv) if she refuses to have sex with him, and (v) if she burns the food. Treated as a composite measure, accepting wife-beating in any scenario was coded 1, meaning that the respondent approves of wife-beating. It was only recoded to 0 if the respondent rejected all five hypothetical reasons for wife-beating (indicating zero tolerance for wife-beating). The binary outcome (Any acceptance = 1, No acceptance at all = 0) was used as the outcome variable in each dataset.

### Independent variables

The primary independent variables were Internet use and usage of the traditional media types (e.g., radio, television, newspapers):

- (a) **Internet use:** Men and women were asked if they ever used the Internet. Those who responded in the affirmative were further asked about the frequency of usage. Three categories of users are identified: Respondents who answered "Not at all" to using the Internet were recoded to 0, "Less than once a week" recoded to 1, and "At least once a week" to 2.
- (b) **Traditional media usage:** Similar to the measurement used for Internet access, usage of traditional media, such as radio, television, and newspapers, was each recoded to 0 if respondents answered, "Not at all," 1 if used "Less than once a week," and 2 if used "At least once a week."

### Control variables

The following sociodemographic, economic and residential covariates were controlled for their potential effects on both the independent and outcome variables: (i) Age (in years); (ii) Education (no education = 0 to higher education = 3); (iii) Marital status (never-in-union = 0, currently married = 1, cohabiting = 2, and widowed, separated, or divorced = 3); (iv) Household wealth index (poor = 1, middle-class = 2, rich = 3); (v) Religion (Catholic = 1, Other Christians = 2, Muslims = 3, Traditional religion or others = 4); (vi) Place of residence (urban

= 1, rural = 2); (vii) Region (Northern Nigeria = 1, Southern Nigeria = 2). The choice of covariates was influenced by findings from previous studies that reported significant associations between the variables and wife-beating attitudes among male and female respondents (see, for example, Alabi & Ramsden, 2021; Jesmin & Amin, 2017; Ola, 2020; Oyediran, 2016; Uthman et al., 2009).

## Analytical strategy

Each of the three datasets in the current study (the men's, women's, and pooled datasets involving both sexes) was analyzed. Men's and women's datasets were first analyzed independently before being pooled and analyzed to capture the potential moderating effects of gender on the relationships between media usage and wife-beating justification. Since the dependent variable was binary, logistic regression models examined the relationship between media usage and attitudes towards wife-beating. These were preceded by several descriptive statistical analyses, with chi-square significant tests at a .05 significance level. Both the descriptive and inferential statistical analyses used the recommended survey sample weights to account for the complex survey designs.

## Results

### Socio-demographic profiles of respondents and bivariate analysis

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents. The mean ages were 29.2 years ( $SD = 9.7$  years) for women and 32.6 years ( $SD = 12.1$  years) for men. More than half of the men (58.6%) and women (67.2%) sampled were currently married, while about one-third (37.3%) of the men and more than one-fourth (25.2%) of the women were single (i.e., never in a union). The rest identified as divorced, widowed, or separated. More women (31.9%) than men (22.6%) had no formal education; however, more men (63.1%) had at least a secondary or higher education than women (50.6%). In addition to the gender gap in education, the data revealed a gender gap in media usage. Men (32.9%) were about twice as likely to have used the Internet than women (15.1%); radio (67.5% vs. 55.8%), television (59.8% vs. 52.2%), and newspapers (34.16% vs 15.7%). The most significant digital gender gaps were recorded for Internet and newspaper usage, perhaps due to the relatively high technical and literacy skills required. On average, more women (28.9%) accepted at least one reason for wife-beating than men (22.02%).

**Table 1:** Sociodemographic, Economic, and Residential Characteristics of the Respondents

	Males		Females		Both		Chi-square test	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	X <sup>2</sup>	p value
<b>Current age</b>								
15-24	3,888	29.21	15,284	36.55	19,171	34.77		
25-34	3,391	25.48	13,433	32.12	16,824	30.52		
35-44	3,401	25.55	9,403	22.48	12,804	23.22		
45 and above	2,631	19.77	3,701	8.85	6,333	11.49	1,200	.00
<b>Marital Status</b>								
Never in union	4,963	37.28	10,550	25.2	15,513	28.1		
Married	7,797	58.6	28,121	67.2	35,919	65.2		



	Males		Females		Both		Chi-square test	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	X <sup>2</sup>	p value
Cohabiting	383	2.88	968	2.32	1,351	2.45		
WDS <sup>a</sup>	168	1.26	2,181	5.22	2,349	4.26	1,100	.00
<b>Highest education</b>								
No education	3,005	22.57	14,603	34.92	17,608	31.94		
Primary	1,911	14.36	6,039	14.44	7,950	14.42	958	.00
Secondary	6,107	45.88	16,583	39.65	22,691	41.16		
Higher	2,288	17.19	4,596	10.99	6,884	12.49		
<b>Religion</b>								
Catholic	1,518	11.4	4,345	10.4	5,864	10.6		
Other Christians	4,572	34.3	14,872	35.6	19,444	35.3		
Islam	7,116	53.5	22,372	53.5	29,488	53.5		
Traditional /Others	105	0.8	232	0.6	337	0.61	20	.00
<b>Residence type</b>								
Urban	6,182	46.44	19,163	45.82	25,345	45.97		
Rural	7,129	53.56	22,658	54.18	29,787	54.03	2.4	0.12
<b>Internet usage</b>								
Not at all	8,937	67.1	35,503	84.9	44,440	80.6		
Less than once a week	760	5.7	992	2.4	1,752	3.2		
At least once a week	3,614	27.2	5,326	12.7	8,940	16.2	2,000	.00
<b>Listens to the radio</b>								
Not at all	4,332	32.55	18,478	44.18	22,811	41.37		
Less than once a week	3,640	27.35	10,901	26.07	14,541	26.37		
At least once a week	5,339	40.11	12,442	29.75	17,781	32.25	669	.00
<b>Reads newspapers</b>								
Not at all	8,764	65.84	35,255	84.3	44,018	79.84		
Less than once a week	2,538	19.07	4,632	11.08	7,170	13.01		
At least once a week	2,009	15.1	1,934	4.62	3,943	7.15	2,400	.00
<b>Watches television</b>								
Not at all	5,349	40.18	19,992	47.8	25,341	45.96		
Less than once a week	3,463	26.01	8,084	19.33	11,547	20.94		
At least once a week	4,499	33.8	13,745	32.87	18,244	33.09	334	.00
<b>Wife-beating attitudes</b>								
Not justified	10,380	77.98	29,728	71.08	40,108	72.75		
Justified	2,931	22.02	12,093	28.92	15,024	27.25	278	.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,311</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>41,821</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>55,132</b>	<b>100</b>		

Note: The mean age is 32.6 years for men and 29.2 years for women; WDS<sup>a</sup> = widowed, divorced, separated; All estimates are sample weighted to reflect actual population parameters.

Table 2 presents data on the bivariate relationships between media usage, socioeconomic status, and wife-beating justification, with chi-square test results. The results show that women were more likely to justify wife-beating than men, and the chi-square test is significant. The bivariate results also suggested that in both sexes, frequent Internet usage reduced wife-beating acceptance among weekly users (10.6%) compared to less than weekly users (17.5%) and non-users (31%). Except for newspapers, acceptance of violence also seemed to decline with the increase in the frequency of traditional media usage: acceptance among weekly users of television (16.5%), less than weekly users (22.7%), and non-users (37.1%), radio's weekly users (19.6%), less than weekly users (22.8%) and non-users (36%). Among the socioeconomic factors, an increase in age, educational level, and urban residence also significantly reduced

an individual's acceptance of wife-beating. However, these relationships were tentative and subject to changes once other factors were controlled.

**Table 2:** Prevalence (%) of Wife-Beating Justification by Media Usage and SES Status

	Males (%)		Females (%)		Both	
	Not Justified	Justified	Not Justified	Justified	Not Justified	Justified
<b>Wife-beating attitudes</b>						
Justified one reason?	78.0	22.0	71.1	28.9	72.8	27.3
Pearson X <sup>2</sup> ( <i>p</i> value)			278 ( <i>p</i> = .00)			
<b>Internet usage</b>						
Not at all	75.1	24.9	67.5	32.5	69.0	31.0
Less than once a week	76.0	24.0	87.4	12.6	82.5	17.5
At least once a week	85.4	14.6	92.2	7.8	89.4	10.6
Pearson X <sup>2</sup> ( <i>p</i> value)	163 ( <i>p</i> = .00)		1,200 ( <i>p</i> = .00)		1,400 ( <i>p</i> = .00)	
<b>Listens to the radio</b>						
Not at all	73.5	26.5	61.7	38.3	64.0	36.0
Less than once a week	74.3	25.7	78.2	21.8	77.2	22.8
At least once a week	84.1	15.9	78.8	21.3	80.4	19.6
Pearson X <sup>2</sup> ( <i>p</i> value)	138 ( <i>p</i> = .00)		1,200 ( <i>p</i> = .00)		1,300 ( <i>p</i> = .00)	
<b>Reads newspapers</b>						
Not at all	75.5	24.5	68.5	31.5	69.9	30.1
Less than once a week	78.0	22.0	85.4	14.6	82.8	17.2
At least once a week	88.7	11.3	83.3	16.7	86.1	14.0
Pearson X <sup>2</sup> ( <i>p</i> value)	174 ( <i>p</i> = .00)		634 ( <i>p</i> = .00)		825 ( <i>p</i> = .00)	
<b>Watches television</b>						
Not at all	74.1	25.9	60.0	40.0	62.9	37.1
Less than once a week	75.2	24.8	78.2	21.8	77.3	22.7
At least once a week	84.8	15.2	83.1	16.9	83.5	16.5
Pearson X <sup>2</sup> ( <i>p</i> value)	140 ( <i>p</i> = .00)		1,900 ( <i>p</i> = .00)		2,000 ( <i>p</i> = .00)	
<b>Age</b>						
15–24 years old	70.6	29.5	68.6	31.4	69.0	31.0
25–34 years old	79.0	21.0	71.5	28.5	73.0	27.0
35–44 years old	82.0	18.1	73.7	26.3	75.9	24.1
45+ years old	82.5	17.5	73.2	26.8	77.1	22.9
Pearson X <sup>2</sup> ( <i>p</i> value)	142 ( <i>p</i> = .00)		80 ( <i>p</i> = .00)		223 ( <i>p</i> = .00)	
<b>Education</b>						
None	73.0	27.0	57.0	43.0	59.7	40.3
Primary	76.2	23.8	69.8	30.2	71.4	28.7
Secondary	76.9	23.2	78.5	21.5	78.1	21.9
Higher	89.1	10.9	90.6	9.4	90.1	9.9
Pearson X <sup>2</sup> ( <i>p</i> value)	230 ( <i>p</i> = .00)		2,400 ( <i>p</i> = .00)		2,600 ( <i>p</i> = .00)	
<b>Residence</b>						
Urban	81.9	18.1	82.5	17.5	82.3	17.7
Rural	74.6	25.5	61.5	38.5	64.6	35.4
Pearson X <sup>2</sup> ( <i>p</i> value)	99 ( <i>p</i> = .00)		1,500 ( <i>p</i> = .00)		1,500 ( <i>p</i> = .00)	
Total (%)	78.0	22.0	71.1	28.9	72.8	27.3
Total (N)	10,380	2,931	29,728	12,093	40,108	15,024

*Note: All estimates are sample-weighted to reflect actual population parameters.*

## Multiple logistic regression results

Table 3 presents the results of the multiple logistic regression models fitted to assess the effects of Internet and traditional media usage on users' attitudes toward wife-beating in Nigeria in adjusted odds ratios (aORs) and 95% confidence intervals. The women- and men-only data results are presented in separate columns. The last two columns contain the results from the pooled data. It also included an extra independent variable – gender, besides other covariates.

**Table 3: Reporting Adjusted Odds Ratios of Attitudes Toward Wife-Beating**

Variable	Men's data		Women's data		Pooled data	
	aOR	95% CI	aOR	95% CI	aOR	95% CI
<b>Independent Variable:</b>						
<b>Internet use:</b>						
<b>Not at all (Ref.)</b>						
Less than once a week	1.09	(0.86, 1.38)	0.76*	(0.58, 0.98)	0.95	(0.80, 1.13)
At least once a week	0.73***	(0.62, 0.86)	0.47***	(0.39, 0.56)	0.61***	(0.54, 0.70)
<b>Radio: Not at all (Ref.)</b>						
Less than once a week	1.06	(0.92, 1.22)	0.73***	(0.65, 0.81)	0.77***	(0.71, 0.85)
At least once a week	0.85	(0.72, 1.01)	0.78***	(0.70, 0.86)	0.79***	(0.72, 0.87)
<b>Television: Not at all (Ref.)</b>						
Less than once a week	1.19*	(1.01, 1.41)	0.97	(0.86, 1.09)	1.04	(0.94, 1.14)
At least once a week	0.97	(0.81, 1.18)	0.99	(0.88, 1.12)	0.94	(0.85, 1.03)
<b>Newspapers:</b>						
<b>Not at all (Ref.)</b>						
Less than once a week	1.32**	(1.11, 1.56)	0.97	(0.85, 1.10)	1.18**	(1.06, 1.31)
At least once a week	0.87	(0.70, 1.07)	1.43***	(1.16, 1.75)	1.25**	(1.08, 1.45)
<b>Control Variable:</b>						
<b>Gender: Female (Ref.)</b>						
Male					0.76***	(0.69, 0.83)
<b>Current Age: 15–24 (Ref.)</b>						
25–34	0.81*	(0.68, 0.96)	1.01	(0.94, 1.10)	0.96	(0.89, 1.03)
35–44	0.71***	(0.58, 0.87)	0.91	(0.84, 1.00)	0.86***	(0.79, 0.93)
45 and above	0.64***	(0.52, 0.79)	0.91	(0.80, 1.03)	0.79***	(0.72, 0.88)
<b>Education: None (Ref.)</b>						
Primary	1.04	(0.85, 1.26)	1.00	(0.89, 1.13)	0.97	(0.87, 1.07)
Secondary	0.98	(0.80, 1.18)	0.92	(0.81, 1.04)	0.88*	(0.79, 0.97)
Higher	0.53***	(0.41, 0.69)	0.59***	(0.49, 0.72)	0.50***	(0.44, 0.58)
<b>Religion:</b>						
<b>Romans Catholic (RC)</b>						
Other Christians	0.89	(0.72, 1.10)	0.72***	(0.62, 0.83)	0.76***	(0.68, 0.86)
Muslims	0.83	(0.64, 1.07)	1.00	(0.86, 1.17)	0.96	(0.85, 1.08)
Traditional and others	1.44	(0.89, 2.33)	1.43	(0.71, 2.89)	1.48	(0.90, 2.41)
<b>Marital Status:</b>						
<b>Singles (Ref.)</b>						
Married	0.84	(0.70, 1.00)	0.87**	(0.78, 0.96)	0.89*	(0.82, 0.97)
Cohabiting	0.54*	(0.30, 0.98)	0.95	(0.75, 1.20)	0.88	(0.71, 1.07)
WDS	1.73**	(1.18, 2.54)	0.76***	(0.65, 0.88)	0.82**	(0.72, 0.94)
<b>Household wealth:</b>						
<b>Poor (Ref.)</b>						
Middle	0.91	(0.75, 1.10)	0.87*	(0.75, 1.00)	0.89	(0.79, 1.01)
Rich	0.89	(0.71, 1.12)	0.65***	(0.56, 0.77)	0.72***	(0.63, 0.82)
<b>Residence: Urban (Ref.)</b>						

Variable	Men's data		Women's data		Pooled data	
	aOR	95% CI	aOR	95% CI	aOR	95% CI
Rural	1.07	(0.93, 1.23)	1.52***	(1.34, 1.72)	1.42***	(1.28, 1.57)
<b>Region of Residence:</b>						
<b>Northern (Ref.)</b>						
Southern	0.64***	(0.53, 0.78)	0.51***	(0.45, 0.58)	0.54***	(0.48, 0.60)
<b>Constant</b>	<b>0.62**</b>	<b>(0.45, 0.85)</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>(0.63, 1.01)</b>	<b>0.81*</b>	<b>(0.67, 0.98)</b>
<b>Observations</b>	13,311		41,821		55,132	

*Note: All estimates are weighted using recommended sample weights; Confidence intervals in parentheses; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ ; WDS - widowed, divorced, separated.*

As expected, men and women who used the Internet weekly were consistently significantly less likely to justify wife-beating compared to non-users; the odds ranged from aOR = 0.73, 95% CI [0.62, 0.86],  $p < .001$  among men to aOR = 0.47, 95% CI [0.39, 0.56],  $p < .001$  among women and aOR = 0.61, 95% CI [0.54, 0.70],  $p < .001$  in both. This result means that weekly Internet users in Nigeria were significantly less likely to justify wife-beating compared to non-users, irrespective of gender. Among women, those who used the Internet less than once a week also had reduced odds of wife-beating justification compared to non-users. Among men, the difference between non-users and less than once-a-week users was not significant. These findings were consistent with our hypotheses.

Although the pooled data showed that radio and newspaper usage was significantly associated with users' wife-beating attitudes, the data, when disaggregated by gender, further revealed that the relationship pattern varies by gender. Among men, radio was not significant in its association with wife-beating attitudes. However, the direction of the relationships predicted increased acceptance for men who used the radio less than once a week but reduced acceptance for weekly users, each compared to non-users. Meanwhile, among women, those who listened to the radio were significantly less likely to justify wife-beating if used less than once a week (aOR = 0.73, 95% CI [0.65, 0.81],  $p < .001$ ), and if used weekly (aOR = 0.78, 95% CI [0.70, 0.86],  $p < .001$ ), when the datasets were pooled for both genders, both less than once a week (aOR = 0.77, 95% CI [0.72, 0.87],  $p < .001$ ), and weekly radio users (aOR = 0.79, 95% CI [0.72, 0.87],  $p < .001$ ), were significantly less likely to justify wife-beating.

Men who used the television less than once a week were significantly more likely to justify wife-beating. In contrast, the difference between weekly viewers and non-viewers of television in Nigeria was not statistically significant. Also, among the women, usage of the television was not significantly associated with wife-beating attitudes controlling potential covariates. The insignificance of the relationship was consistent even after pooling the data to include both genders (potentially comparable to increasing the sample size). Television viewership was not a strong predictor or influencer of wife-beating attitudes in Nigeria.

The association between newspaper readership and users' attitudes toward wife-beating presents unexpected results. Contrary to expectations of reducing wife-beating justification via the press media, Nigerians who read newspapers weekly (aOR = 1.18, 95% CI [1.06, 1.31],  $p < .01$ ) or less than once a week (aOR = 1.25, 95% CI [1.08, 1.45],  $p < .01$ ) were significantly more likely to justify wife-beating compared to Nigerians who did not read newspapers at all. When data was disaggregated by gender, the relationship was only significant for men who read newspapers less than once a week and those who read weekly; however, newspaper readership was associated with increased odds of justifying wife-beating with both men (aOR = 1.32, 95% CI [1.11, 1.56],  $p < .01$ ) and women (aOR = 1.43, 95% CI [1.16, 1.75],  $p < .01$ ). This

result means that, on average, newspaper readers in Nigeria were more likely to justify wife-beating than non-readers.

Among the significant control variables associated with wife-beating attitudes, gender showed that men were less likely to justify wife-beating than women (aOR = 0.76, 95% CI [0.69, 0.83],  $p < .001$ ). Attaining higher education reduced wife-beating justification among men (aOR = 0.53, 95% CI [0.41, 0.69],  $p < .001$ ) and among women (aOR = 0.59, 95% CI [0.49, 0.72],  $p < .001$ ), each compared to their counterparts with no formal education. While divorced, widowed, and separated men were more likely to justify wife-beating norms compared to single (i.e., never-in-union) men (aOR = 1.73, 95% CI [1.18, 2.54],  $p < .01$ ); and divorced, widowed and separated women were less likely to justify wife-beating compared to single (i.e., never-in-union) women (aOR = 0.76, 95% CI [0.65, 0.88],  $p < .01$ ). Similarly, cohabiting men (aOR = 0.54, 95% CI [0.30, 0.98],  $p < .05$ ) and married women (aOR = 0.87, 95% CI [0.78, 0.96],  $p < .05$ ) had reduced odds compared to the single women. While household wealth was not significantly associated with wife-beating attitudes among men, women in rich households were significantly less likely to justify wife-beating than women in poor households (aOR = 0.65, 95% CI [0.56, 0.77],  $p < .001$ ). Women in rural areas were significantly more likely to justify wife-beating than women in urban areas (aOR = 1.52, 95% CI [1.34, 1.72],  $p < .001$ ). Women who identified as non-Catholic Christians had reduced odds compared to Catholic women. Finally, men (aOR = 0.64, 95% CI [0.53, 0.78];  $p < .001$ ) and women (aOR = 0.51, 95% CI [0.45, 0.58],  $p < .001$ ) in southern Nigeria region were less likely to justify wife-beating compared to their counterparts in Northern Nigeria region.

A summary of the multivariate logistic regression showed that among the media types used by Nigerians, only the Internet significantly reduced wife-beating justification among its male and female users; radio reduced justification but only among women; where significant, newspaper reads increased wife-beating justification and television returned weak relevance (increased acceptance among men). Higher education and residence in southern Nigeria reduced wife-beating justification.

## Discussion of findings

This study investigates the relationship between Internet and traditional media (e.g., radio, television, newspaper) usage and users' attitudes towards wife-beating in Nigeria. Employing the agenda-setting theory, it examines whether frequent usage of the Internet and traditional media sources in Nigeria is significantly associated with users' likelihood to reject or accept wife-beating, using nationally representative data collected from women aged 15 to 49 years and men aged 15 to 59 years in the most recent Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey of 2018.

The results show that radio was the most accessed media in Nigeria, with 67.5% of men and 55.8% of women users. Next was television, with 59.8% of men and 52.2% of women users. Newspaper readership (34.2% vs. 15.7%) and Internet use (32.9% vs 15.1%) recorded the least patronage among male and female users. The gender digital divide revealed in these rates as largely favoring men perhaps echoes the long-term gaps in male-female human capital development in patriarchal Nigeria (Adeosun & Owolabi, 2021). Again, the spill-over effect of the male-female human development gaps is further revealed as Nigerian women (28.9%) were significantly more likely to justify wife-beating than men (22%).

After controlling for other factors in both sexes, only frequent Internet usage was consistent and negatively associated with wife-beating justification; frequent radio use also reduced the odds of wife-beating justification—but only among women. Where significant, newspaper readership significantly increased wife-beating justification rather than decreased it. Within the conceptualizations of the agenda-setting theory, these results are not unexpected—except for the result of frequent television use. As hypothesized, frequent Internet use was negatively associated with users' wife-beating justification (Hypothesis 4). This might be because the Nigerian media space is saturated with several anti-wife-beating messages from many concerned individual netizens (Alaran, 2022; Dav, 2022) as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations addressing the problem of intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW) in Nigeria (Hauk Foundation, 2020; Leonard, 2022; Spotlight Initiative, 2021a). As agenda-setting theory argues, frequent exposure to IPVAW issues, especially messages that persuade users against all forms of IPVAW, can influence users against IPVAW. The current study's finding of a consistent negative relationship between Internet use and wife-beating approval among men and women of all marital statuses (single, married, cohabiting, widowed, divorced, separated) is consistent with previous findings in Alabi and Ramsden (2021, 2023) who studied only currently married and cohabiting men and women in Nigeria. Both seem to highlight the importance of Internet use as a helpful source of information against wife-beating acceptance in Nigeria.

Similarly, as hypothesized in Hypothesis 1, the massive inattention to gender and IPVAW-related issues in the Nigerian print media (Aladi & Okoro, 2021; Anorue et al., 2012; Ochonogor et al., 2022) and perhaps also their poor framing when reported (Degarr & Okpeh, 2016; Ekeh, 2018; Tijani-Adenle, 2016), seem to explain why frequent newspaper readers were significantly more likely to justify wife-beating compared to individuals who never read newspapers at all. Meanwhile, that radio reduced the odds of justification but only among women might be because men are more hesitant to attitudinal change than women (Karatsoli & Nathanail, 2020). Similar to the finding on radio, Karatsoli and Nathanail (2020) investigated whether the effects of use on planning activities and travel choices differed for men and women and found that "women are affected at a higher degree than men and are more receptive to the information provided" (p. 8) because the women in their samples themselves reported that they were more likely to seek opinions on the media before making those decisions.

Meanwhile, the effects of frequent television usage were not significant, except among men who watched television less than once a week. Although the study hypothesized that frequent television usage would be negatively associated with wife-beating justification, given the recent activities of Spotlight Initiative sponsoring anti-IPVAW content on televisions (Hypothesis 3), this study's result regarding the lack of significance of television usage on wife-beating attitudes suggests that the effects of the sponsored anti-IPVAW contents on television are not yet national and significantly evidenced. Supporting this result are studies that content-analyzed television messages and suggest that without sponsorships, television content may not broadcast anti-IPVAW content (Orji & Emeana, 2021; Swindle, 2023). On the contrary, television content such as entertainment movies, comedy skits, and others may contain messages that only reflect patriarchal gender norms that undervalue women (Orji & Emeana, 2021). More efforts are needed to effectively include and communicate issues related to IPVAW to the public in Nigerian television, radio, and newspaper media. The Nigerian traditional media space has yet to be saturated with persuasive and effective anti-IPVAW campaigns.

Despite the findings of this study, it is essential to highlight some limitations. Perhaps the first is data limitation; as the study relied on cross-sectional data, it cannot claim causality but associations. Another data limitation is that although the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) is the most widely used data on media and attitudes towards IPVAV in the global south, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, it does not collect data on specific content media users were exposed to on the Internet, radio, television, and newspapers. Despite this shortcoming, several previous studies have found the data usable, like the current study (Alabi & Ramsden, 2021; Antai & Antai, 2009; Jesmin & Amin, 2017; Ola, 2020; Oyediran, 2016; Uthman et al., 2009). Beyond previous efforts, this study took advantage of some of the most recent qualitative studies that analyzed the frequency and framing of IPVAV reportage in the Nigerian media to make sense of its quantitative results. Future studies might benefit more from longitudinal and randomized control trial datasets. Since the DHS began to collect data on Internet use for the first time in the DHS-7 round, starting in 2015, future studies might also benefit more from DHS data if subsequent surveys contain information on actual contents media users are exposed to in the global south. Altogether, more nationally representative data are needed, especially in the global south, to adequately understand and discuss the links between media usage and users' attitudes toward IPVAV in a global south context.

## Conclusion

This study examined the association between Internet and traditional media (e.g., television, radio, newspapers) usage and users' attitudes toward wife-beating in Nigeria, using nationally representative survey data collected in 2018 among Nigerian men and women. The results show that Nigerian online media users were significantly less likely to approve of wife-beating compared to their non-users. However, for traditional media usage, only radio usage was significantly associated with a reduced likelihood of wife-beating approval, and only among women. Newspaper usage was associated with a higher level of justification, while television was not significantly related to wife-beating attitudes. This study emphasizes the need for the Nigerian traditional media channels to effectively join the international campaigns seeking to eliminate IPVAV per Target 5.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Dr. Adam K. L. Cheung, Professor Gina Lai, Ms. Anna SP LO, the entire Department of Sociology staff, the Faculty of Social Sciences at HKBU for their support, and the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments. To God be all the glory.

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